

CLOSE UP

Editor : K. MACPHERSON

Assistant Editor : BRYHER

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Vol. VII No. 5 November 1930

AS IS

BY THE EDITOR.

Talking about one's own work is a bore—especially when that work lies behind, completed, and therefore, to oneself, no longer living. This funny business about *Borderline*. The reviews have been coming in, and there seem to be deductions worth making in respect of film criticism in general. But first it will be necessary to go back, and that is a pity. Please do not think I wish to impose myself or my personal ideas on you or on anybody. It is simply that the two sides which we know every question has, are here remarkably manifest, with rather surprising results.

Borderline began to be composed about eighteen months ago. It was finished in June of this year. Eighteen months ago Europe was unaware, and so was I, of Eisenstein's now commonly accepted, though little understood, theory of over-tonal montage. Eighteen months ago I decided to make *Borderline* with a "subjective use of inference." By this I meant that instead of the method of externalised observation,

dealing with objects, I was going to take my film into the minds of the people in it, making it not so much a film of "mental processes" as to insist on a mental condition. To take the action, the observation, the deduction, the reference, into the labyrinth of the human mind, with its queer impulses and tricks, its unreliability, its stresses and obsessions, its half-formed deductions, its glibness, its occasional amnesia, its fantasy, suppressions and desires.

Could this be done. Eighteen months ago I said firmly; Yes, it can. And to-day, having made *Borderline*, I repeat, yes, it can. It had not been done, it had not been touched, except in Pabst's frankly psycho-analytical film, *Secrets of the Soul*, which met with, if anything, greater derision among experienced critics. And there, again, it had been treated objectively, from outside, from the clinical point of view. There was something of it in *Uberfall* (*Accident*), which has also been known as *Assault and Battery*. Suggestion dominated this film. Suggestion dominated *Borderline*. *Borderline's* suggestion, however, was of conflict, of mental wars, of hate and enmity. *Borderline* was to be jagged. *Uberfall*, a much shorter film, was simplified. It dealt with one emotion only—that of fear.

Eighteen months ago everybody was saying the silent film had reached perfection. It had no further to go. When in reality it had only reached the first stage in an intensive development. And oddly enough, it was not until after the talkies had swept the silent film out of existence, that *Borderline*, perhaps the only really "avant-garde" film ever made, came about. I say this deliberately, and without false pride—indeed, without any pride. I have said that *Borderline*

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has many faults. How idiotic to pretend that it has not. Traversing new ground, it had all the rawness of a pioneer. But pioneer it was. And as I have said to my critics, in ten years time, the "obscurity" of which they complain will be plain as punch. And I think it will take ten years for them to recognise it.

But the faults of *Borderline* are not the faults that have been complained of. As a matter of fact some of what I call its faults have been condoned or praised. And what I know to be good has been almost unanimously ignored or condemned. But that was as I expected. I know what my purpose was and I know exactly where I have achieved it. You must give me credit for that amount of integrity after these intensive years of study and analysis. You may argue that even if I have achieved my purpose, is it worth while when the result is only partly comprehensible? For that I have no answer vehement enough. Yes, yes, yes. Comprehensibility. What is it? A demand for concessions. Simplicity, what is that? A demand for concessions.* Simplicity is for children. Simplicity is for tired people. And everything in life is done for them. Everything is made more ordinary, more shallow, more trivial for these souls who demand facile understanding. *Everything in life is done for them!* And the result is we stand quite still and our minds lie fallow and soggy with traditions—more concessions—and wonderful innovations come about and we have neither the will nor wit to use them. I say that the essence of film art is not and can never be so simple as "simplicity."

* See Bryher on the Simple Film in this issue.

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These rudimentary "power-illusions" are for the weakest of the weak. Simplicity is easy to cope with, and sometimes and often it has a rightful place. But the film, to me, and to anybody who bothers to think twice, is *life*, and breathes with the breath of life, and life is not simple, and life cannot be kept within any shallow limits of form or formulae.

Borderline, then, whether you like it or not, is life. To a mind unaware of *nuance*, to a one-track mind, it would naturally appear chaotic. I do not deny for a moment that it is chaotic. It was intended to be. But over this chaos rings and reverberates one pure, loud, sullen note. I had no specific name for it, but now we know it is overtone. Some of the strips contain pictures so simple, so almost uninteresting, that alone they would seem to have no justification. But, nevertheless, they have. Some, again, are pictorially luscious. These images have never "just happened." It was not for nothing that I made a thousand or more drawings. I worked in terms of *tension*. My drawings, and my images were composed to have no static value. As I have said in an article in *The Architectural Review* for November, the film unit, or, in this case, film strip, or scene, cannot be thought of as a static quantity. Its essential character is *transfere ntial*, and it is this transferential character which alone has informed the structure. Static forms have been used, certainly. And very often. But solely to drive forward the mental impetus.

And, what is interesting to me, *Borderline*, with its "meaningless obscurity," its "vague symbolism," etc. etc., has met with none of these objections among the Germans. Their minds, it is true, work differently. They are attuned

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to the mental, especially in its more sombre aspects. But among quite undistinguished Germans there has been an appreciation that has been lacking in the most enlightened English. I think some of my friends in England are honestly abashed by it. Kindly enough, I think they feel I have let myself down and even displayed some ignorance or foolishness. So many of them have evaded me since it was shown, or made some fleeting allusion. And this has interested me keenly. I do believe that England has definitely not the approach to things of the mind that one or two other peoples have, notably the Germanic countries and the Jews. The metal sciences, psycho-analysis, for example, seem not quite happy in their growth, somehow climatically softened and changed. The Englishman rejects too much of his emotional being, and is embarrassed if he has to be brought face to face with it. His fear of " morbidity " and the neurotic is a race neurosis which sets him at a disadvantage when it comes to emotional, or mental-emotional experience. This attitude is clearly evident among my critics. They reject *Borderline*, not because it is complex—for its power is its complexity, its " unexplainedness "—like something seen through a window or a keyhole ; but because it is a film of sub-conscious reasoning. And if, among the English, the sub-conscious is ruefully admitted, for some definitely social reason it " is not to be condoned " !

Drama, of which only part filters through. That, to my mind, alone constitutes drama. There is much more to it than is ever seen—as there would be in life. Film, stage and literature have made bed-rock of the false principle of *complete enaction*. There is no complete enaction in life. There

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are hundreds of layers, inferences and associations, enmeshing everything into everything. Germany understood this. The lovely words of Pabst have invalidated all destructive carping. "You must be proud of your work!"—and to my abashed "I had not thought of it like that," "You *must* be proud!"

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

WARNING.

On account of the Congress of the Independent Cinema, the December issue of *Close Up* will not be published until December 8th.

The Second International Congress of the Independent Cinema is to be held at Brussels from November 28th to December 1st. Germany, Spain, Sweden, Italy, and Poland are to be represented there, in addition, of course, to Belgium and perhaps we can add England, for it is expected that *Borderline* directed by Kenneth Macpherson, and a film by Mr. Blakeston, will be shown.

As it is hoped to screen a great deal of the experimental work that has been done in Europe during the past year and as the Congress does not end until December 1st, we are postponing the issue of *Close Up* until December 8th, in order that we may publish the first full account of the films shown there together with many photographs. We anticipate that this will be the most complete survey of the work of independent units yet produced.

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Full particulars of the Congress may be obtained from the Secretary, Monsieur Pierre Bourgeois, 280, Avenue Leopold II, Brussels, Belgium.

Intending visitors have the choice of a short sea trip via Calais and on by train to Brussels or they may go the longer sea passage via Ostende.

The cost of subscription to the Congress varies from 75 to 150 Belgian francs. Films will be shown at the Palais des Beaux Arts.

The December number of *Close Up* will be a record of the Congress with additional illustrations and should be of permanent value to film libraries.

All enquiries as to subscriptions and other data, should be addressed to Monsieur P. Bourgeois, address as above.

DANGER IN THE CINEMA

It is surprising how afraid people are of thought. They can endure discomfort, earthquakes, hurricanes and even war with equanimity provided they never have to think.

It must be some terror from infancy—some fear possibly of omnipotence, that is the root of this dislike. It is helped too, by the educational system that demands obedience and memory, rather than question and search. But the ultimate results are tragic.

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Recently a firm advertised for an office boy. Four hundred and ten replies were received in answer to a single advertisement. Roughly graded, the replies fell into three groups. About two thirds of the entire number were boys aged between sixteen and nineteen, who had passed their matriculation examination and had sometimes received additional education. They had never before sought employment and asked from 15s. to 25s. a week in wages. Another group, usually unskilled, were already in employment but wished to change. The smallest group of all (and it was one of these who got the job) offered some definite office qualification, and was out of work through trade depression.

Why were these four hundred or more boys, with no definite city training, allowed to flounder on to an already over-crowded market? Thought on the part of parent and schoolmaster, could have prevented this wastage and discouragement.

In most instances their parents had paid for their education over a period of from eight to eleven years. Otherwise it had been paid for by the State. The cost can scarcely have been less, at the lowest estimate, than two hundred pounds and it was probably much more. None of the applicants interviewed from this group had any knowledge of typewriting or elementary business routine nor were these mentioned in the letters. On the other hand many stated that they had gained honours in English history, one had been a drummer in his school band, and there were numerous certificates that the applicants had done well in scouting. Unfortunately it is not customary to beat a drum to announce callers, discourse with a salesman on the feudal system, or slide down the office

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roof. It might add colour to business life but would assuredly close the business or invite investigation from the police.

But matriculation papers are not easy. Most schools begin to prepare their pupils at eleven and they take the examination at fifteen. At least 280 of actual instruction would be given on any one subject, with homework and probably cramming in addition. Yet anyone should be able to type-write at a moderate speed in 30 hours.

Education to be of value should have two purposes in view. It should endeavour to fit the child to the job most suitable for him, and it should help him to find some interest for his leisure. These boys had not been helped in either.

There was recently a correspondence in *The Times*, blaming the modern child for desiring expensive amusements. What else is he to desire? For I have known of dozens of cases of children who were forced to discard interest such as reading, photography, zoology, etc., when they went to school in favour of compulsory games. There was never time or if the interests were not actually forbidden, few survived the attitude of cold indifference on the part of the school authorities. Yet when the boy goes to his first job, when work is routine and probably dull, the school, instead of having helped him to find some absorbing interest for his leisure that would take him out of the narrow world that surrounds him, has hindered instead by giving him merely the desire for amusements he has not the money to purchase. No wonder most young Englishmen are discouraged and apathetic.

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And how many schools think enough to try to prevent their pupils struggling out into an over-crowded market?

The tragedy is that they will cling to an old fashioned idea that the scholar and the trader have nothing in common. It is better for the boy to spend 280 hours learning the intricacies of feudal management than to study typewriting or the phrasing of an ordinary business letter. History is "culture"; common sense apparently isn't. (Lest it be thought I have a personal dislike of history I might remark my earliest and one of my deepest desires was to be a historian.) Why were these boys not trained instead for a definite trade?

It is the duty of the School to break down the absurd prejudice that prefers a pound a week in the city to several pounds a week in overalls, at a factory.

And parents and Press go on grumbling at the children. A few hours constructive thought on the part of their elders might save good material from wasted lives.

But what has education and an office job got to do with cinema? *Close Up* is after all devoted to films and not to social problems. Only that there seems to have developed a dangerous tradition in England that the cinema "must be simple." And if this statement be investigated it will be found to mean, "*the cinema must not think.*"

Cinema began and cinema ended in the minds apparently of rather too many people with Charlie Chaplin, and the early melodramas. A slightly wider group accept, with hesitation, Mickey Mouse. This kind of "simplicity" alone is to be regarded as cinematic. That is, they desire to confine the nursemaid's tale, and this is to be the standard, as in a child's mind the first telling of some story is the one that must be ad-

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hered to afterwards. There is abundant reason for such a layer to be popular, but no justification for it to be preferred to growth. The adult with the mentality of the eight-year-old is pitied but not admired.

Films however that have made the greatest contribution to cinematography, have been films founded upon thought. It is to be suspected that some mistake unity of purpose for simplicity, when they speak of the Soviet film being simple. Eisenstein has probably one of the most complex minds in the world to-day and many sequences of his films (though they apparently deal with simple things) require the spectator to think and not merely to see, if he would understand. Pabst always demands intellect, and the finest comedy filmed to date, *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, presupposes in the spectator a rather rare ability to think through appearance. Probably it achieved its great success in Germany because the German is taught to think if he is not always allowed to investigate.

It is probable that the Chaplin films have the effect of hypnosis on some spectators because they were the first pictures that moved that these spectators saw, as children. This should be no barrier to their enjoyment, but it is a definite reason against making them the standard for film art. English material is some of the finest in the world and the country is practically untouched from the cinema point of view. But there is great danger that unless this tradition of the primitive film be fought, the movement forward that seemed to have begun, will be again arrested. We cannot go on being children. Either we grow up or we regress to idiots. Antics are good in their place and there are many moments when

a convenient custard pie could soothe the feelings. In the meantime four hundred and ten boys are struggling for a single pound a week job and there are not enough trained people to cope with the increasing number of abnormal children. What is needed in the English cinema is psychological investigation and the stating of facts people would prefer not to know, existed. Unless the intellect can dominate cinema, let us put films away with meccanos and picture blocks.

BRYHER.

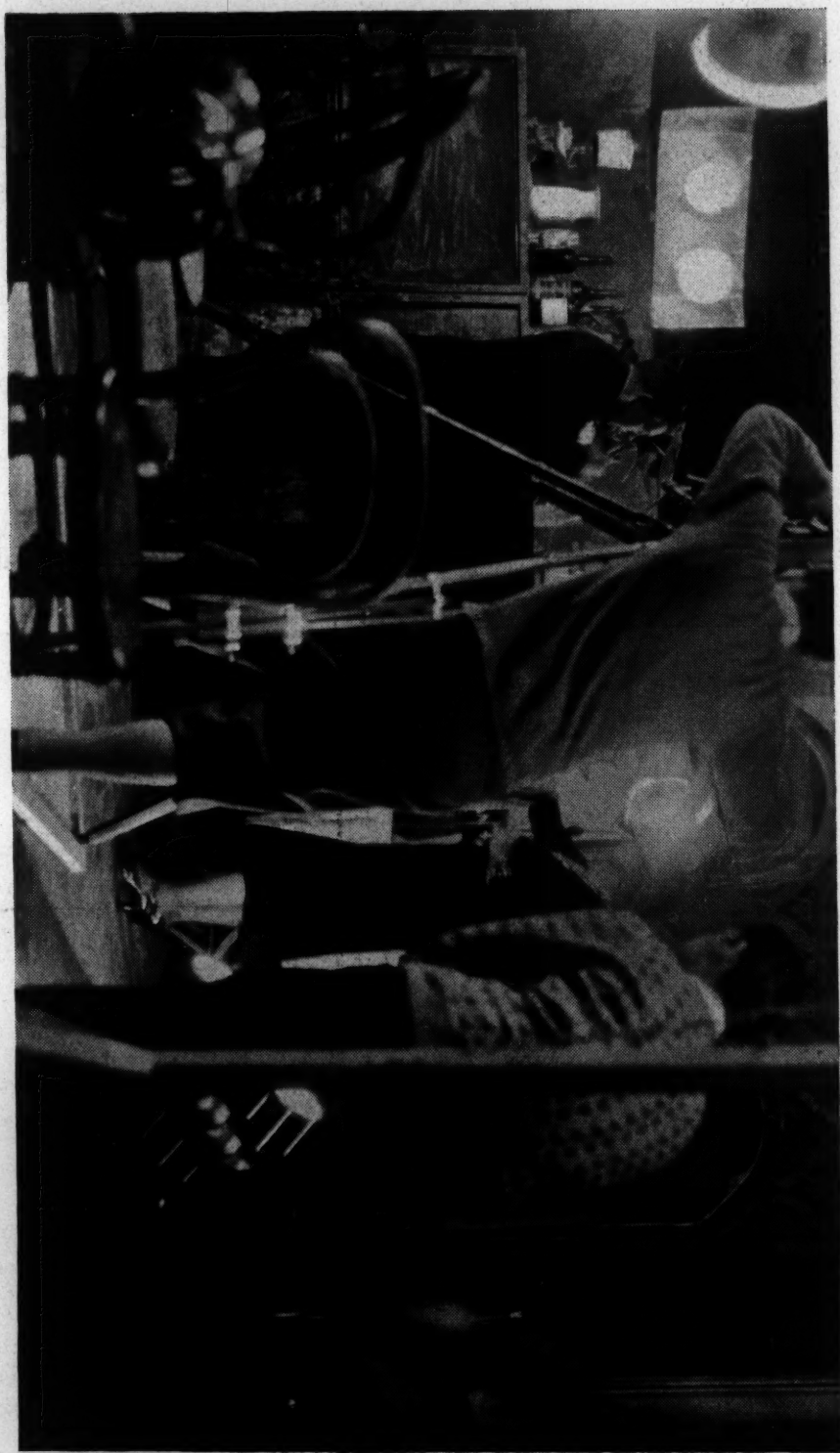
THREE FUNNY STORIES

The most striking thing about one of our larger studios in England, the thing that strikes the visitor's eye most forcibly, is a big notice outside saying "GO SLOW." This is understood to be the motto of that particular studio.

The second story is of our largest film company, which is affectionately known as B.I.P. This name is supposed to be derived from the Latin epitaph, the change of initial from R. to B. being justified, as "British" and anything to do with rest, slumber and Rip-van-winkle-ism are held to be synonymous. But of late, and hereby hangs a tale, the British industry has shown signs of stirring in its sleep. It has produced a number of presentable pictures; not neces-



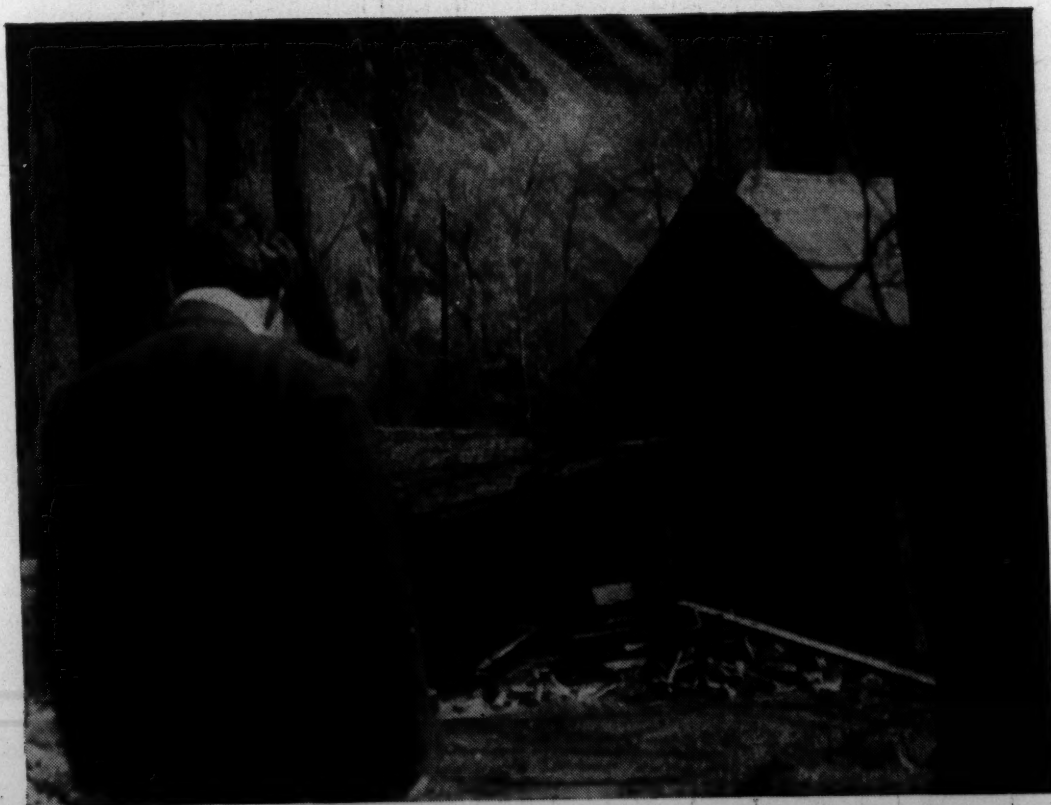
At work on *Borderline*, the mixed reception of which at a showing in London recently, Mr. Macpherson discusses in this issue.

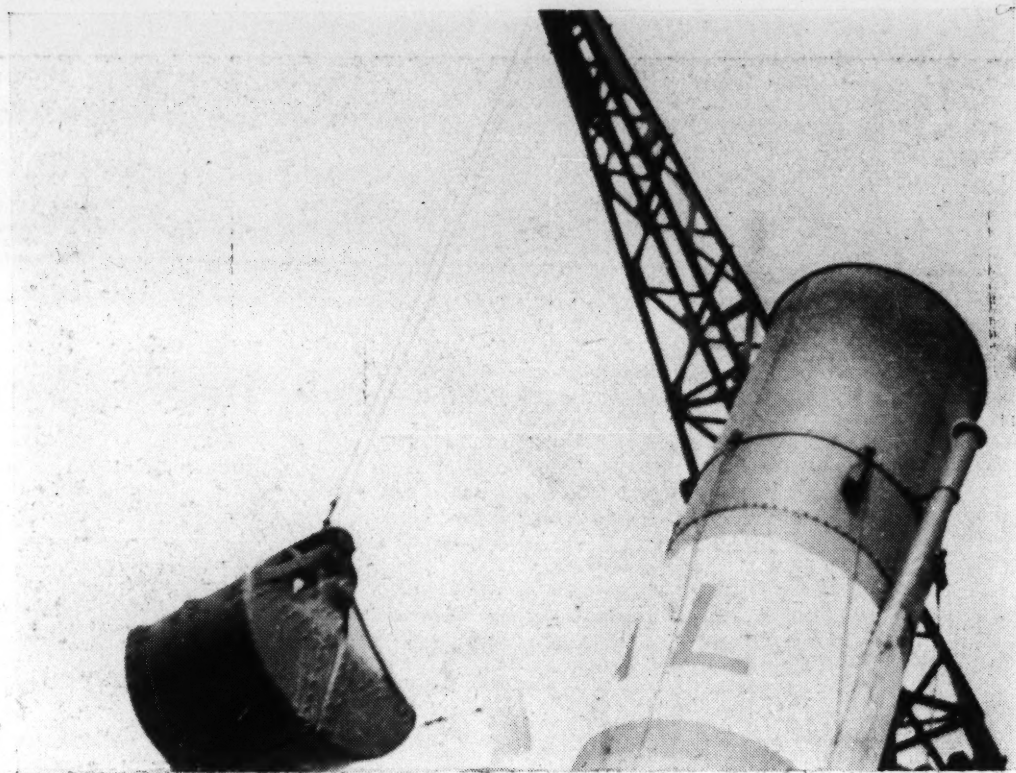


Working on the café sequence of *Borderline*.

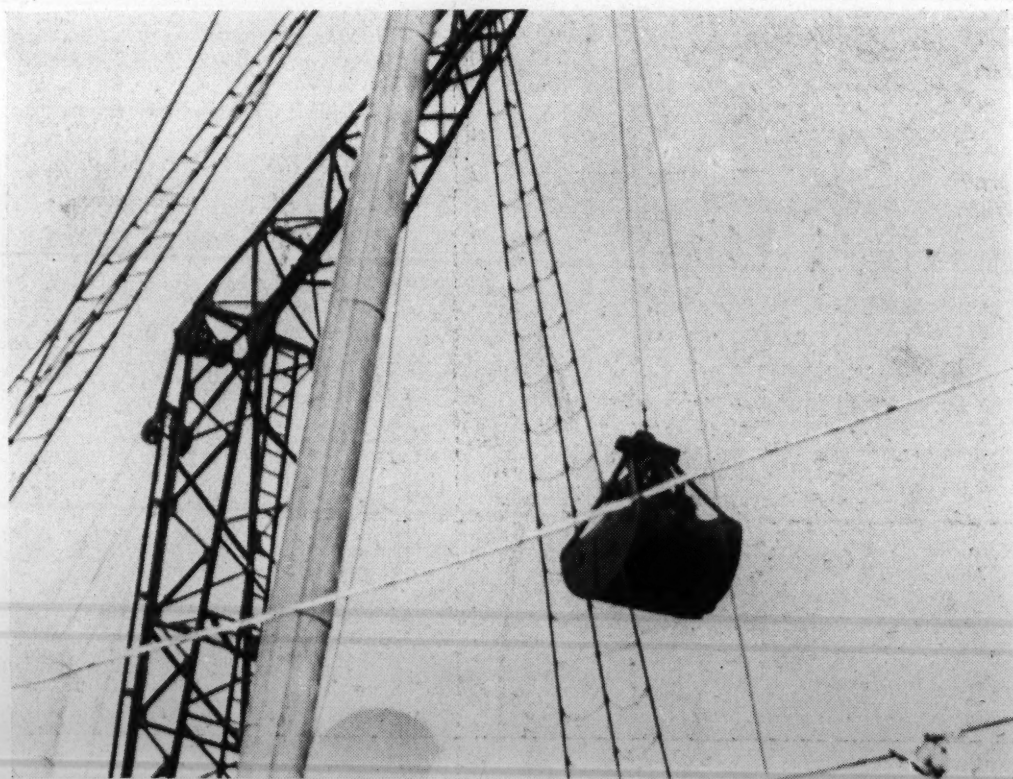


Two scenes from *Borderline*.



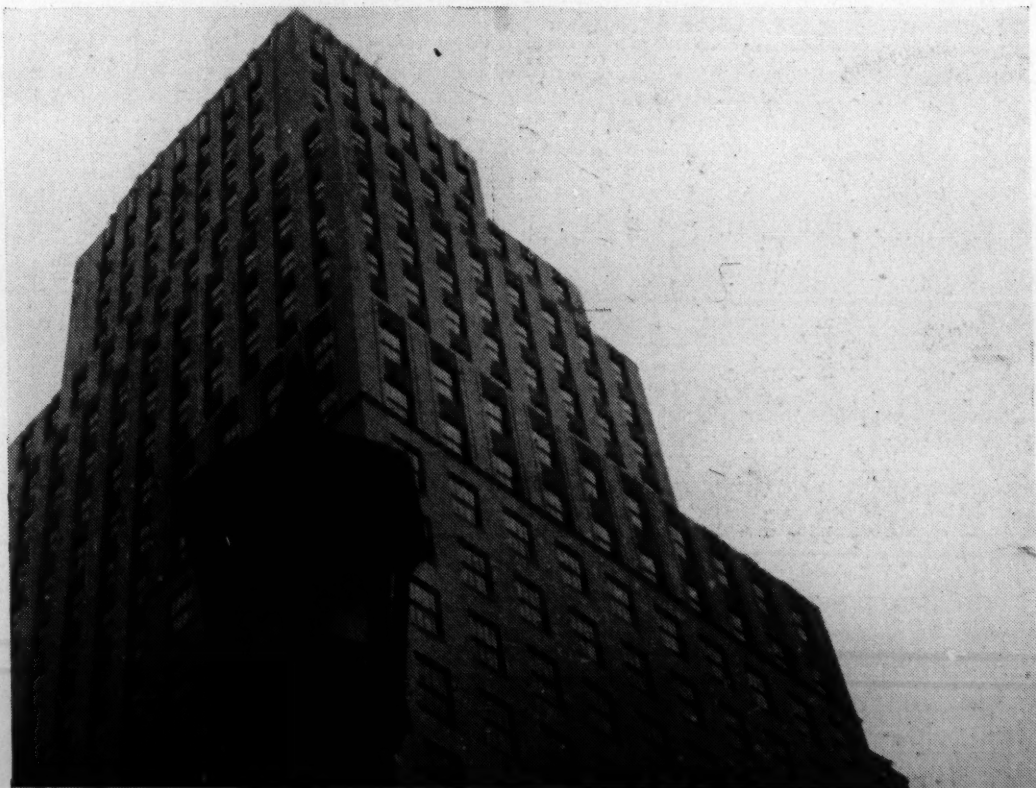


From *A City Symphony*, a one-reel study of the multiple rhythms in the life of a modern metropolis, made by Herman G. Weinberg at a total cost of eighty dollars. These two pictures are from a sequence dealing with the refueling of a ship, and are commendable for their graceful simplicity of line and suggestion.



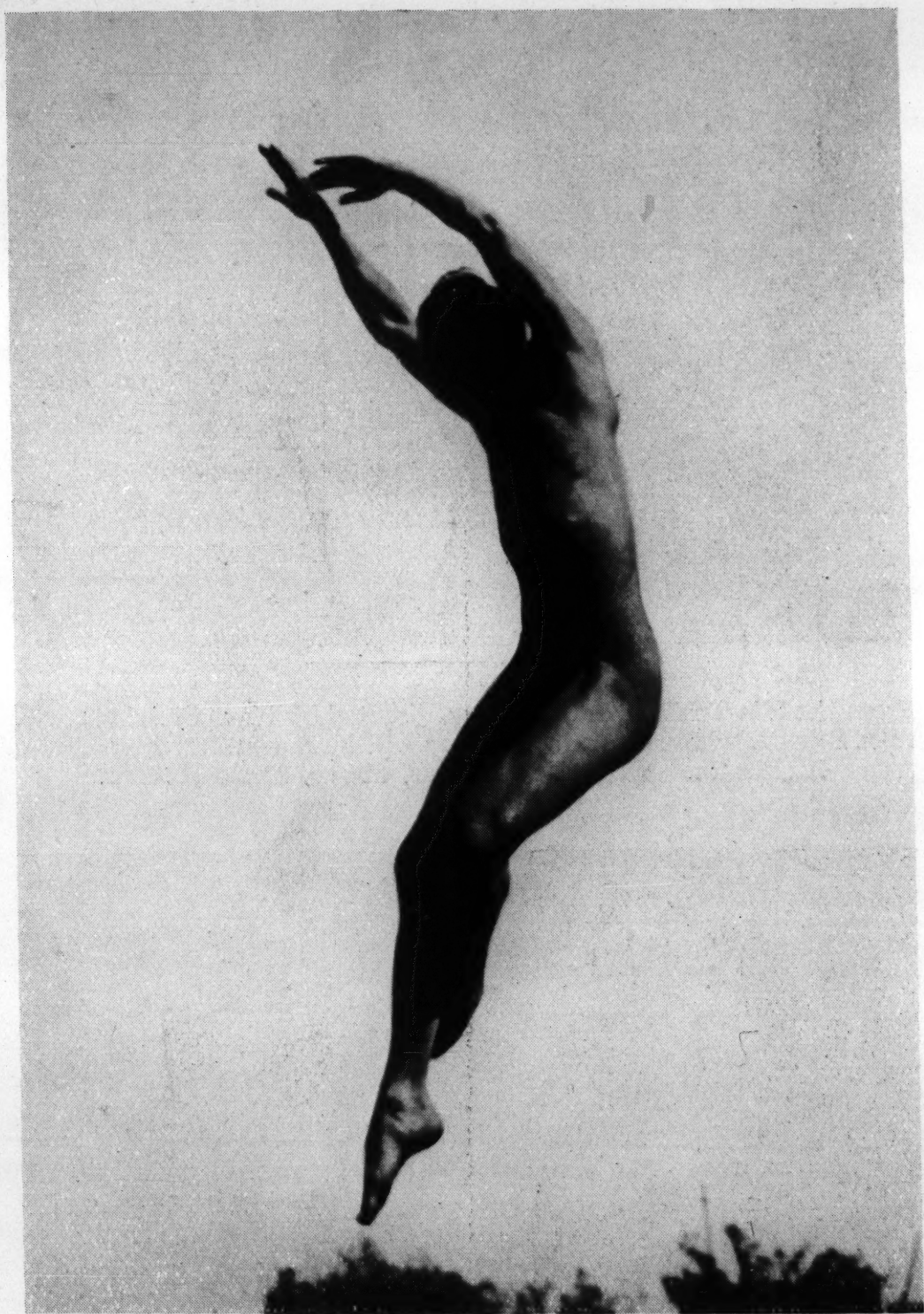


From *A City Symphony*. A skyscraper sequence. These four photos are exclusive to *Close Up*.





These two wonderful action studies were taken by Mr. A. M. M. Payne in Berlin, of the American dancer, Mr. Ted Shawn. They show the remarkable sense of significant timing which is invaluable to the cinématist—the capturing of the essential in movement. To have achieved this with a still camera is an even more remarkable achievement.



These studies were taken with a Leitz "Leica" Camera, using Perutz Special Leica Cinema Film, from which these were enlarged. The exposure given was one two-hundredth of a second.



From the Ufa-Tonfilm *Rosenmontag*, directed by Hans Steinhof, with Lien Deyers, whose work in *The Spy* will be remembered by British Audiences. With Lien Deyers, above, Lucie Höflich.



Photos: Ufa.

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sarily good cinema and all that, but good average entertainment. It has devised a system whereby in return for films so dull as to be intolerable to all but the middle-classes, it offers farces so commonplace that they appeal solely to the nit-wits; thus only the intelligent are left uncatered for, and one third of the public is really a very small portion, old boy. We make, first *Two Worlds*, then *Almost a Honeymoon*, *Escape* and *A Warm Corner*. Six British films are in consequence shown simultaneously in London cinemas. Let me say that not all of them are as grim as these mentioned, classic *Murder* for instance. But one is far worse than any mentioned and this is my point. For a long time there has been running at the Carlton, where Chevalier's film is the big piece, a British film, and everybody is very glad it should run for so long, and be in a theatre controlled by Paramount, etc. It is a farce and the star is someone called Leslie Fuller and he belonged, I am told, to a concert party known as the Margate Pedlers. So of course everyone who follows the Margate Pedlers will follow his film, and that is just grand.

He is a batman on service in India. A comic batman, you understand, and oh, an excessively comic India. There is a lieutenant in love with the general's daughter (general, lieutenant and daughter all equally comic). The lieutenant gets in wrong by giving the general a curio which has "Birmingham" stamped on the bottom. He does not know what to do, but hearing from an Indian beauty that there is a temple with an image with wonderful pearls, no others like them, he decides to rob the temple, placate the general and win the daughter. All this is made possible because he is on familiar terms with the Indian beauty. She does wiggling

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dances in the shrubbery and he says "Not to-night, dear," and she sort of says "You English are so cold." The batman, to whom she has wiggled a little earlier, is not so cold, but he has gone off with a Cockney, also comic, servant-girl. Yes, it is the British army in India . . . the same army Pudovkin was so rude about in *Storm Over Asia*.

The batman and his girl arrive at the temple, and watch a (comic) ceremony. They look at the image, which they call a "gawd" and find extremely comic. They accidentally push it over, and the batman then takes its place and delivers comic remarks to the worshippers, who are very awed. The lieutenant arrives to rifle the image, and is caught by the priests, etc. But the image-batman comes to life, abuses them and fills them with horror, so that they let go the lieutenant. The general arrives on the scene and is (can you beat it?) so impressed by the subaltern's "daring" at risking his life at the hands of infidels, all for his fair daughter's hand, that he gives him that hand.

During the course of his masquerade as an image, Leslie Fuller calls the Indian priest "undressed tripe." He calls him lots of other things, which I was so alarmed to hear that I could not believe them. They were so incredible that I will not risk putting them down. But they followed the lines of the tripe-repartee.

After this film there followed a news reel with pictures of the Bombay riots.

Now, taking things in the order in which they occur, is is very tactful, is it good business, to show such a film at such a time, in such a place? Is it frightfully pleasant to show it where there are lots of Indians, when there are riots

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in India? That, of course, is the least important thing; the riots are our fault, and due to the outlook that produces such a film.

But what really worried me, being not in the least religious in the creed sense, was the very bad fun made of another race's religion. It isn't very amusing to see a Margate Pedler doing slapstick in a temple, and I don't care whether that temple is the Taj Mahal, or St. Paul's. It isn't my idea of fun to knock an image over, take its place and, opening a door in its stomach, make funny faces through it. It isn't funny in this case, not only because it mightn't be very funny anyhow, but because we could not do it with our own creeds. No one would allow a charwoman out on a spree to take the place of Mary, Mother of God, in an Italian church; no one would think of using a crucifix as a property in slapstick. No one would even agree that a temple (of any other creed) was a suitable setting for love scenes, comic or otherwise. But because this is India, all this is excessively funny and gay. British films are looking up, and the censor smiles on it and bans *Martin Luther*, because it might offend Roman Catholics.*

We hear a lot of the loss of white prestige among "natives" through films showing white men as monsters and white women as Messalinas (these are understood to be American pictures); we know that that is why black and brown and yellow races are getting so "bumptious." We say it is misrepresentation. But what can this film be? If it is misrepresentation, it is evil, degrading and all the things

* And everyone found Pudovkin's lamasery scenes "offensive mockery of religious beliefs of an ancient civilization."—Ed.

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we say of the other pictures; if it is true, why ban *Storm over Asia* for libelling the British uniform? At least the officers in that film are doing their duty. In *Kiss Me Sergeant* the white men are in India, battenning on the "natives," bullying them, and regarding the temples as places for "officers and gentlemen" to rob. By all means let us show up religion as a funny thing. It would hurt a lot of people's susceptibilities, but it would clear up a lot, do a lot of good. Let us shriek with laughter at Lourdes, set up Oberammagau as an aunt sally, grow hysterical at the Lambeth Conference, and by means of laughter kill the superstitions of Passover and Pentecost, "Our Lady borne smiling and smart, in a pink gauze gown all spangles, with seven swords stuck in her heart." Let us do all this, it would clear the air. But I cannot believe that the makers of *Kiss Me Sergeant* were actuated by any such purifying principle. I think to them the religion of Indians is very funny; a good joke and fair game. They probably think that the Indians themselves must see the fun of it. After all, we are the favoured race; we're white, and what we do is white. Indians and such must recognise that. Nobody dare laugh at us . . . for if they dare their films get banned. Look at that Russian fellow. . . . Yes, undoubtedly the makers of Leslie Fuller's film think "idols" very amusing, and it never occurs to them that our own religions have more than a touch of absurdity about them . . . such for example as a series of laws made for a nomadic people applied to settled nations; exhortations to a race whose one hope lay in multiplying being accepted by countries suffering from gross overpopulation; a whole system of religious belief formed in the East

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being taken over by a Western civilization . . . there is nothing funny about that. There isn't. It is all very unfortunate. But there is, it seems, a great deal that is funny about Indian temples. . .

And they call it *Kiss Me Sergeant*, and what I cannot understand is not even the film being shown, but being MADE.

And as to *Storm over Asia*, and the behaviour of the wearers of the alleged British uniform, it will be interesting to compare *Hell's Angels*, in which (unless the scenes are cut out) the behaviour of the English officers is very surprising (or perhaps not). But that will be passed, and Mr. Hughes is a millionaire.

Whilst on the subject of censorship (it is so boring, that one doesn't want to bring it up again) let me describe a plot of a new American film. A woman having got into difficulties with three suitors, goes to the house of a fourth man; he is permanently half-drunk, and makes her completely so. She collapses, and he carries her to his bed, locks the door and sits outside all night. She wakes up, and, rather gratuitously, decides that something must have happened. So she says he will obviously have to marry her. To make everything quite clear, it is only on their way to be married that he explains that he was outside all night, whereupon she exclaims that, then, there is no need for him to marry her, is there? . . . well, that's all right. But why is that passed and so much else isn't? Perhaps because it is Gloria Swanson in *What A Widow*, and the censor thinks he is giving us sex-maniacs a sop.

ROBERT HERRING.

ENOUGH—NO MORE!

The reader may rest assured that all facts in this article can be backed by irreproachable evidence. He may experience his moments of apprehension, but may he never do us the injustice of wondering whether the cited truth be doctored.

Norwood is not, particularly, an eccentric and superstitious town; its new super cinema need not, therefore, be regarded by the conscientious student as an extravagant example of cinema architecture. So, let us glance at the Norwood Regal. The vestibule attempts to "create a friendly and intimate effect with Spanish and Italian influences, taken from the palaces of Spain": in fact the vestibule is somebody's idea of a coloured Spanish courtyard. Opposite the entrance is a semi-circular bay beautified with twisted columns, arches and modelled pedestals. The coffered ceiling is lit by Italian bowls. There are wrought iron grilles, topped with lanterns, and a multitude of floor standards of a Spanish nature. Inside, the auditorium is covered with a pergola "ornate with trailing vines". Side walls are surmounted by creeper, while tree-tops suggest a hidden garden. Two grills, hiding the organ pipes, are "ornate with greenery." A sun, above the proscenium, shoots out decorative rays.

Inhabitants of Staines, it may well be imagined, would be

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pained if one were to insinuate that they are peculiar. Let us inspect their Majestic Cinema. "The atmospheric theme is Venetian"; which means that the auditorium is conceived as a canal. Clouds and stars are spattered over the blue ceiling, and the walls are fitted with rings for mooring gondolas. The proscenium arch is a colonnaded arcade, thrown up in relief by blue lighting. Two Venetian turrets *disguise* the projection box (a shamefully mechanised thing).

Predominating colours, inside the auditorium of the new Astoria in the South of London, are light silver, light gold, red, green and fawn, the whole conjuring up "the barbaric splendour of Egypt." Every seat is of red wood with green satin brocade. The ceiling consists of a decorated treillage, with vermillion as prevalent hue. Gold has been chosen for the proscenium and the side walls support plaster panels used as reflecting surfaces for "modern lighting." Side walls to the circle are occupied by Egyptian scenes; helmets and spears of soldiers, in these classical tableaux, are reproduced in gold and silver leaf. A huge piece of Egyptian tapestry does duty as a safety curtain. The Lytham Palace is another example of a recent Egyptian "atmospheric"; the main structure being cream-coloured facience with a buff frieze, plum-coloured parapet and a panelled frieze in cream on a blue ground depicting sculptured figures with a Wedgewood effect. A dominant window is set in a metal grille and balanced by side windows treated in cellulose gold. Painted sphinxes, on stepped dados, are sheltered in the auditorium. The panels, representing desert scenes, are executed in colours "barbarous and regal." Electric light fittings are constructed of tubes and beads of glass depending from concealed

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three-colour lights, which cause the glass tubes to gleam from top to bottom. Mention must be made of the pay-box of pink mirror glass, giving a "flattering sunburnt return to each observer."

The Victoria Metropole is another new, *show-case* super. We wonder if the poet ever dreamt of such a marble entrance hall, with its surround of red onyx and the black and gold of the pillar bases. Spanish Renaissance style gave the architect scope to play with "artistic plaster surfaces." Seats are in rose and gold and the orchestra rail is of carved wood. Yet another Spanish super is the Granada at Dover, replete with Moorish arches.

But we are becoming positively embarrassed by the superabundance of current examples. Shall we talk of the paper stucco oak beams in the cinema at Tottenham; or of the mosaic floor, at the Capitol, Epsom, which has been achieved by piecing together odds and ends of material; or of the "elegant sylvan scenes" which are murals at the Astoria in the Old Kent Road? Shall we turn to America, where atmospheric cinemas have been popular for years, to discuss the stacks of armour and statuary in marble, stone and gold at the Warner Brothers' Beacon; or the "formal lawn of Louis XIV in gay regalia for a moonlight festival" which is the Chicago Paradise Theatre; or Loew's Paradise Theatre, New York, designed in Italian Baroque ("a design with which certain liberties were taken, suggestions of the strong influence of the Austrian Baroque, and many of the architectural features and details are idealised replicas of the architecture of the Vatican and St. Peter's Cathedral Rome"). Or, are we ready to draw our conclusions?

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Surely, from the very showman's point of view, these houses are an entertainment in themselves? And that is limitation, for one should not repeat the same entertainment indefinitely.

Aesthetically, what can we say about resplendent ornaments stuck on as a final dressing? What about the cinema built as a cinema and not as an imitation meadow? What about ornament as "the most tasteful expression of necessary forms"? What about the utilitarian principles of the clean, magnificent architecture of Germany? (Better seats and ventilation rather than additional flutings.)

* * *

"On her head was a barrel-shaped hat surmounted by a point, of gravel-coloured velvet, and of considerable dimensions. Inside it, seven mechanical birds warbled in twenty-one different notes every three-quarters of a minute. They were observable through glass panes let into the side of the hat and moved by means of invisible clockwork springs."

Papillèe, Marcus Cheke's silhouette of life under the Directoire.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

FILM NOVITIATES, ETC.

In my Notes in the August *Close Up*, in my comment on the makers of *The Silent Enemy*, the reader will find the description, "novices with talent," which should read "novices without talent." I am glad the error occurred: it gives me a lead into some observations upon film novices.

Film criticism suffers from the presence of the perennial novice. He appears with a frenetic outcry of discovery and reiterates ephemeral platitudes. The novice is not always a minor, he may sometimes be mature of age, if not of judgment. Such one is Mr. Barnet G. Braver-Mann (né Braverman) of Detroit, Michigan. In the clarion of Hollywood, *Film Spectator*, Mr. Braver-Mann (then Braverman) recorded the tenets of the film structure. The omniscient *Literary Digest*, which presents both sides of unimportant questions, called Braverman "a challenging esthetician." That non-committal, sphinxlike referee recognised in the dicta of the Detroit Aristotle "first principles of cinematic art." It should have read "principles of the first cinematic art." Ford's townsman (the townsman, i.e., of the Ford-car), overcome by this acclaim from Funk and Wagnalls, the seat of American orthography, immediately restated his platitudes—a prerogative of youth—and put a hyphen into his name—

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signature of aristocracy—and published his restated platitudes in *Experimental Cinema*, Philadelphia—coast to coast. His tenets are emphatic as well as redundantly fallacious. Here they are in their spurious virginity :

“ The medium of cinematic art is motion.

“ Motion as an art medium is self-sufficient and has no affinity to such media as words (away with explanatory sub-titles), music (sound), speech (spoken titles), or painting (colour and static design).

“ Motion applied to a succession of images can transmit thought, stimulate emotions, indicate time, place, character, sound, speech, atmosphere, physical sensation, and state of mind.

“ Motion, when utilized as an art medium by artists, has proven the motion-picture a major art form, logically independent, inevitably self-sufficient, and utterly free of intrusion by the mechanics of any other medium.”

More than a dozen years ago, Dr. Hugo Münsterberg of Harvard University, at the behest of the film-industry and by its subsidy, examined the movie to lend it scholastic sobriety and absolution as an art. He investigated it academically for its contemporaneous character, rather than for its nature as a medium in evolution. He approached the film in the capacity of a clinical psychologist drawing esthetic conclusions from his analyses. His book, *The Photoplay*, is of importance in the history of film-criticism. It gave the film the rights of an independent art and indicated its power over that of the theatre to objectify “ in our world of perception our mental act of attention.” Starting as a psychologist, he reasoned as psychologist, from recorded characteristics :

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"Depth and movement alike come to us in the moving picture world, not as hard facts, but as a mixture of fact and symbol. They are present and yet they are not in the things. We invest the impressions with them.

"The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention and by it has furnished art with a means which far transcends the power of any theatric stage."

The psychologist is speaking here, and from his observations he comes to his statement of the art of the movie :

"Moving pictures are not and ought never to be imitation of the theatre. They can never give the esthetic values of the theatre; but no more can the theatre give the esthetic values of the photoplay. The drama and the photoplay are two coordinated arts, each perfectly valuable in itself.

"The next step toward the emancipation of the photoplay decidedly must be the creation of plays which speak the language of pictures only.

"As soon as we have clearly understood that the photoplay is an art in itself, the conservation of the spoken word is as disturbing as colour would be on the clothing of a marble statue.

"The colours are almost as detrimental as the voices."

Fourteen years later novices repeat these criteria for the *initial* integrity of the movie. Indeed, the constant repetitions of this first-form attitude are wasteful and even effrontery, viewed in the light of the film's subsequent evolution. And yet they recur and recur with the dogmatic assertiveness of an original discovery. Or, Mr. Welford Beaton, editor and publisher of *Film Spectator*, the novice's godfather, stirred by the fundamentalness of the godson, re-discovers Münsterberg.

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Instead of seeing Münsterberg as the academic observer, Beaton—in true novitiate technique—accredits the scholar with having been a certain saviour of the cinema, had the moguls been attuned. This is nonsense: the moguls paid Münsterberg to vindicate the movie, and the latter did so.

Writing in *The New Republic*, July 23, on *In Darkest Hollywood*, Mr. Beaton says:

“No matter how far or in what direction screen art advances, Münsterberg’s masterly analysis of its fundamentals will remain always the solid-rock foundation for all its literature. Only those who have read and mastered this work are entitled to boast that they have put their feet on the first rung of the ladder that leads to an understanding of the principles of the screen art.” What Mr. Beaton has to say next is relevant to the preparations for an historical comprehension of the film, and especially of film-criticism:

“In Hollywood there are twenty thousand people engaged in making for world-wide distribution examples of this art. Neither in the main Hollywood library nor in any of its branches can a copy of the book be found. It is not for sale in a Hollywood bookstore. I have not encountered a dozen people who have read it, or two dozen who ever heard of it. The film industry is one of tremendous proportions, yet this great contribution to its mentality is out of print. Hollywood talks in terms of the externals of motion pictures, but does not think in terms of their fundamentals.”

Mr. Beaton might have told us just what Münsterberg has meant to the dozen people who have read him, including his own novices. The book is in the New York library but it has not prevented *Spectator’s* young frenzied contributor, Sey-

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mour Stern, from blowing Münsterberg's "fundamental" precepts (concepts?) up to cosmic entities. This much can be said for Münsterberg: he was not an unqualified absolutist. He recognised a possible argument for colours, tolerated certain captions, and accepted harmonious musical accompaniment. The cart-before-the-horse logic informs Mr. Beaton's approach. He sees the individual as creating the environment. And believes that a devotion to Münsterberg would have saved the film—from the talkie. And harken to this absoluteness: "If Hollywood, which talks about nothing but motion pictures, had known what it was talking about, it never would have gone over so completely to the talkies. It would have known that they cannot permanently endure. It would have known that the silent screen art is fundamentally sound," (is this logomachy?) "and that if the order of their coming had been reversed, the silents, intelligently made, would have chased the talkies off the screen." This is the sort of hypothetical reasoning which is proof of the absence of the historical mind—the mind with a sense of sequence in evolution that would know of the movie's inherent development from the simple to the compound. Mr. Beaton's ignorance of esthetics coincides with his ignorance of social manoeuvres. He terminates his articles with an attack: "... they selected Will H. Hays, who has had much experience in politics and none in business." Exactly. The movie industry, manipulated by Wall Street, selected Hays because, as a politician, he knew the "art" of subterfuge. He acts as camouflage, barrage, and decoy. Wall Street will take care of the business.

The novice-mind obstructs the road to valid criticism:

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social and esthetic, the esthetic in the social. If you want a compendium of the novice-mind refer to the first two issues of *Experimental Cinema*, suspended for the time being. I have been the New York correspondent for it, out of personal sympathy for the editors and of a hope that something valuable might materialize from it. The journal has trekked to Hollywood—the land of frustrated esthetes—with the intention of bringing a “fresh breath” into that morass. Young mystified mystics who have not been able to direct pertinent arrows toward even the periphery of Hollywood are going to influence the production there. Truncated boobs! Actually this is a rationalisation of weakness and egocentricity, of escape and a wish for success. Such aspirations emit a malodor which is even worse than the stench of the west coast marshes. We are developing humbugs.

Novitiate is cult. In the September *Theatre Guild Magazine*, Braver-Mann discovers Charlie Chaplin. A long time ago I began to prick the cult of Chaplin. I know that others have questioned the absolute evaluation of him as (to quote Max Reinhardt) “the beginning and end of cinema.” Bakshy in a brief note indicated Chaplin’s inadequacy as a director of his comedies. Seldes—one of the inflaters of Charlot—like the weathercock he is, re-echoed faintly (in a vague mention) Bakshy’s doubt. Silka in the *Filmliga tijdschrift* refused the sign to unqualified admiration of Chaplin. *Les Chroniques du Jour* devoted a special number to Chaplin, allowing some “Nos” from Carco et al. I am certainly not advocating muckraking—there is something of that suggested by Hugh Castle’s article. Any full study or critique of Chaplin will not simply have to plough through

the cultism of Delluc, Poulaille, Iwan Goll (Chaplinade), the effete poets and painters, Seldes, Stark Young, the *Tribune Libre* (which had a Gala Chaplin, not succeeded—for the first time in its history—by a discussion), etc.; but will estimate Chaplin socially, as I have indicated in the following:

“Chaplin brought into the comedy the English music-hall, whose manner has been his stamp since. But his development, though it has been toward the more precise reference of satire, has not been without the influence of Sennett and Linder. . . . Chaplin extended the comic type to a social center-of-reference and achieved therewith satire—the humour of society.” In this article *New World Monthly*, February, 1930) I went on to indicate the failure to extend the uses of rhetoric in the movie comedy, and assigned as one cause of the failure “the cult of Chaplin.”

“The emphasis upon Chaplin as the film’s one full realization has obscured the origins of American film-comedy. It has also not considered Chaplin’s limitations as a director and the shortcomings of the artist as performer. He has not yet achieved a Don Quixote toward which his comedy tends but does not attain. . . .” In the August 20 issue of *The New Freeman*, I attributed the frustration to several causes: the cultist stress, Chaplin’s own limitations and the suppression of the creative social energies.

A current instance of this cultism is a child’s story written by Michael Gold, *Charlie Chaplin’s Parade*, which never asks whether Charlie Chaplin is an experience of the child of today, if ever he were to the child for whom this book is meant—the pre-adolescent. In my work with children I have learned that Chaplin—subtilized and infrequent in his appearances

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—is considered “ silly ” by children in adolescence, whereas Lloyd—or even the innocuous Bobby Vernon—would be preferred. (Date, as of 1928.)

Braver-Mann goes typically into the Commedia dell' Arte for Chaplin's ancestry with a show of the knowledge of school books. Fred Karno is a more propinquitous forefather. B-M says “ There is nothing stereotyped in the humour of any Chaplin comedy. . . ” Which is erroneous. Chaplin utilized English stereotype; that was his first achievement: the fitting into the movie progression of the intensive frame of English vaudeville. B-M vindicates Chaplin's “ apparently unmethodical manner ” by entrusting it to “ feeling ” (the quotes are Braver-Mann's). Murnau expressed it much more concisely and accurately when he spoke of the spontaneous film of a Chaplin as a *raconte*. But even the fact of Chaplin's being a *raconteur*, while it explains, does not excuse his directorial failure. As a matter-of-fact, Braver-Mann's attempt to validate the cult betrays Chaplin. His article is mainly of Chaplin the single personality. The brief space devoted to Chaplin the creator of the film and the rather quibbling criticism of Chaplin's “ inability to think and work in terms of montage ” reflect two things: Chaplin's directorial limitation, and Braver-Mann's shirking of a major problem. Chaplin's success in *A Woman of Paris* would seem to vindicate him as a director, but we must not forget the arbitrary limitations Chaplin set himself. The sustained interrelationship of characters was between two personages only, and the “ visual continuity ” did not comprise extensive reference. Ideologically and in treatment, the cinema will need to hold Chaplin (and Monta Bell?) responsible for

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an insidious influence, Chaplin's inspirational temperament could create entities in two-reels; increasingly it has made what are but tableaux in his longer films. Every good director allows for the flexibility of the idea born "on the lot."

I too do not deny Chaplin's eminence. But at this late date it is cult-sycophancy to talk about such obvious Chaplin traits as "plasticity, imagination, and mastery of pantomime." By the way, had Mr. Braver-Mann read an article of mine—published several years ago in *The Billboard*—he might have added the choreographic value of Chaplin's two-reelers. The use of adjectives like Rabelaisian (an ignorant though popular use of that adjective incidentally) and Falstaffian do not concern the Chaplin of today—why have not his longer films been more than elongations of his shorter? And all of the numerous descriptions of his type have been anticipated in "the classic hobo," just as Harry Langdon has characterized himself as "a Christian innocent." Braver-Mann has not dwelt sufficiently upon Chaplin's fear of over-acting and his penchant for good tastes: defects in a director . . . see D. W. Griffith. No Chaplin film beyond two reels can compare as a structure-in-comedy with *Hands Up!* No Chaplin film can equal in the enactment of the comic spirit such a work as Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. And Chaplin promised to give us a film of social quixoticism, where his pathos would render the humor poignant as a social indictment. He gave us *The Circus*, in which the pathos seeped out until it trailed after the conclusion of the film. America depressed him, and his own quasi-intellectuality hindered him. His book, *My Trip Abroad*, though prepared by Monta Bell, explains much of Chaplin's *impasse*. When

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he resists the sycophantic and ill-tutored Braver-Manns, the demi-esthete of the Seldes ilk, the paternal metaphysic like Waldo Frank—trapped in controversies with the soul, the populists, the demagogues of letters, the specious enthusiasts, all who would inflict their cult upon him, and listens to demands which urge him to forgo spurious virtues, he may move beyond his present status. Though I doubt that he can do so, in the present mind of the movie.

The suggestion of muckraking in Castle's comments on Chaplin is induced by the typical London playboy tone. Yet Castle has put his finger on one of the ideological flaws in Chaplin's work: "the atmosphere of intellectual despair." It is this pathetic defeatism, this cynicism (which, by the way, in even more offensive forms is discoverable in Lubitsch) that attracts middle-class intellectuals. *Hands Up!* was much more heroic comedy. Castle, I believe, when his tone—as on page 135—becomes direct, didactic even, says much more than Braver-Mann in a fraction of the space. The simultaneity of these considerations of Chaplin points to a crucial moment in Chaplin's career. Muckraking, especially in America, will corrupt the sincere criticism of the man, and equally unscrupulous defences will force a false issue. Chaplin, not ever a secure personality in the American scene, may be further confused. His enthusiasts have been unfair to him: their outcries have been forms of self-expression unmindful of the artist as a developing phenomenon. Add to these the journeyman of the Jim Tully and Konrad Bercovici type and you can have a sense of the sum of pressures upon the mind of Chaplin. Chaplin's severest critic (though this statement appear hypocritic) will be his best friend. Six

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years ago Gilbert Seldes (*The Seven Lively Arts*) said of Chaplin: "He is on the top of the world, an exposed position, and we are all sniping at him. . . . It is because Charlie has had all there ever was of acclaim that he is now surrounded by deserters." Muckraking began early, but it has not accumulated. The Seldeses of criticism will have been responsible for much that will ensue. In their zeal to disprove the effete Stark Youngs they are deflected from the intensive consideration of what is most assertive in Chaplin. True it is there is Sennett in Chaplin (I have said as much), and ironic it is that one who has been called too "literary" a film critic should urge against Chaplin's becoming too literary. Actually what I urge is that the Sennett presence should materialise in scope and the Chaplin in pointedness. "Irony and pity" comprise only a banal slogan: from Anatole France to Paul Eldridge. I disagree with Seldes that Chaplin has excelled in composition, or that the illusion of the impromptu is a dominant virtue. The arabesque of rhetoric articulating a conception of social experience is the end Chaplin should have sought—and would have—in a society where the Seldeses were muted and the critical perceptions active. The populists have done Charlie dirt. They have made their sentimental and wistful pleasure in his whimsicality stand for supremacy in appreciation. Certainly Stark Young was wrong in seeing Chaplin as too much theatre—Charlie re-converted his derivation—but that the latter has not extended his tendency far enough along the path toward fulfilment, was sadly perceivable in the fatuous and dissociated pity of *The Circus*, and in the foreshortened exposure of *The Pilgrim*.

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN.

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HER PUBLIC WE!

"Faster, faster!" said the Red Queen and everybody else, and the de Milleon dollar babies kick higher than ever, and all is safely gathered in. But still they ply us with mechanical genius and "extensions of the medium." The dialogue film has not even got to the stage of a slow-motion talkie before more is happening. (Parenthetically, the slow-motion talkie might be, within its limits, rather exciting, with (for instance) a prayer—or a political speech or historical lecture for that matter—in slow talking progress, as a background to the thoughts, vocally and visually presented, of the listener: the two interrelating, as ideas or sounds in the sermon suggested others in the private thought sequences. When attention increased, the background would increase in tone and tempo, and when most remote from the attention, recede.) The X-ray talkie, too, is hardly here yet, nor, provincially, the wide screen. But even so more is to come. Journalistically, let us hope for the best.

In a very short time we shall be televisionary: seeing and hearing. And we shall see and hear not only the actual performances of the broadcasting studio, but wallow happily in the relayed joys of the cinema studio also. The economic

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vista to the exhibitor may be disturbing, but the telefilm-fan will dutifully applaud the increased luxury and mechanisation of his diversion. Or I don't know. Most audiences like cinemas and not films. There may be applause. But it will be earned, if the telecinema can give some catholicity of programme, and so permit isolation of what it is desired to hear, ensuring that the wretched audience may not be compelled to sit through whatever has been thrown in with the pound of tea, or acres of sugars, that it came to enjoy.

Box-office is the despair of the cinéaste, who sees intelligent experiment bleating everywhere to a noisy death, because of the lack of interested support. In London it was possible to run the Avenue Pavilion purely for the exhibition of "different" (sic) films, but almost anywhere else in England an attempt at such a policy meant failure, owing to a lack of a sufficient concentration of interest. Of course each cinema of any character at all, that was not merely one of a chain projecting the stream of well-publicised wash prescribed by a distant company, had and has a policy of some sort, catering for local predilection. But usually it has merely been the successive presentation of one particular brand of stupendous unattraction—Wild Western, wilder Eastern, wildest of all historical, or tame domestic—the "programme picture." Now this is all most charming and democratic. Programme pictures are very nice, and Clara Bow's money that way. But there *are* other films, although at the moment they are hardly ever seen (I write from a good hunting country) except sometimes hidden, dimly, as the vegetables to a red-meat drama. They have, in England, no definite home. Even the present move among cinemas towards individualisation

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of policy is unlikely to help substantially the showing of "experimental" themes or methods.

The telecinema might conceivably help. Not that it is shamefully suggested that a "new medium" should be pocketed by the people it would particularly interest. Only that their interests should be considered. As these were indulged, so would the numbers of the interested swell, as has happened with the drama. Ordinarily it is difficult to make commercial successes, on the English stage, of Ibsen, Strindberg, Tchekhov or even O'Neill, but their works are frequently and even popularly performed on (or is it over?) the radio, as well as broadcasting plays proper, and narcotic queans of jazz. Parallel. At last the layman may see, without weary ferreting, films at present denied by the apathy of uninformed and the careful rigour of our moral governesses. For even a censor, trained to find anti-social sermons in stones and bad in everything but leg-shows, might believe that films which it would be appallingly dangerous to exhibit communally might well be spoonfed to a public separated into its domestic units. Even if the censor, his head inky but unbowed, refused to see this, (or even to see the films) the telecinema might still cater for the students, as well as the fans, of the screen. By all means, and in most programmes, let there be orthodox pictures of low life and high motives, high life and low motives, and the Middle West with motives which it is hard to understand at all. Let us have the leg, the bottle, and the theme song, or whatever in a few months are the equivalents. Even most students of the cinema can be fans. But give us the opportunity to pick and choose, for tastes differ, even in the fleshly schools, where one man's meat is

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another's Swanson, and Two Black Crows don't make a White. No sitting the show round, but culture or cuties by timetable.

The telecinema will be able to show the Latest and Best, Successes of the Past, Films for the Old Folks, and the whole gamut of refined entertainment. It is a crushing idea, but almost everyone will be happy. We shall be able to enjoy in our armchairs Browning's "film work—eyes and ears—all the distraction of sense": the soporific doses that we love, the distilled daydreams of houris and rectitude over which we are accustomed to dote and doze. And perhaps we may be allowed a few films of beauty and ideas too. If so, the new toy will have at least one offset.

Really, of course, they will merely show films for the Lower Education, every alternate Friday. The other Friday will be Amami night, and we shall all go to the pictures.

PENNETHORNE HUGHES.

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KINO-OLYMPIADA

(Concluded).

Judas. SOVKINO.

Reg.: E. Ivanov-Barkov.

Operator: Giber.

BELLS. Bells of a monastery. Fine buildings, lovely gardens, flowers, fruit, vegetables, animals. All monastery property. People kiss ikons in church, money is filling boxes, many pilgrims to miraculous shrines, money pours in. Priests house well furnished. But workers on land of monastery are not similarly housed nor fed. A whitehaired priest picks flowers appreciatively. Another is studying insects—with a girl. In this apparent contentedness, appear soldiers. Whites. Officers make for monastery. They know where best stuff is! A good billet always for officers of the Czar. Demand special provisions for men, and money. So priest calls on people for further "offerings" to the lord and his appointed. Meanwhile soldiers are collecting their "offerings" by force. A peasant's cow or goat. His only possession, his very livelihood. Pigs and chickens. Any-

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thing eatable they take. Peasants run to priests. But more realistic peasants run for arms, hidden ready for revolt. Ready for the revolution they have waited for so long. Among them rifles and a machine gun. Stealthily they take it to a point of vantage, but are seen by one of the monks, who informs his Superior Father, who immediately informs Chief Officer. Orders. Soldiers advance to attack. Machine gun ready! They retreat. Flower-loving priest implores peasants not to fire. They disregard him, his power is gone—or is it? For he stands in front of the gunmouth, and one of the peasants gives in, and jerks aside the gun. But by now the Whites are on top of them. Too late. Gun is captured. Priest thrown aside. Peasants scatter. Gun now turned on them, despite priests' entreaties. A little boy with aeroplane toy runs across line of fire. He is shot too. Priest runs and picks him up. In church he is laid, mother imploring the Ikon to save him, priest prays, child dies. Priest holds cross before his eyes, but boy turns to aeroplane propellor he still has in his hand. Symbol of the new is his last vision. Outside arrested peasants, inside doubting priest. He goes to Superior, for release of prisoners. Totally disregarded. Meanwhile insect-loving priest is doing his penances, but thinking of the girl. Surreptitiously she comes to see him. They hear someone coming, hide,—in comes one of Superiors with woman who cleans and cooks. Couple hide, and see these two undress and go to bed. Meanwhile prisoners are put in dungeon. Priests are counting out money in their boxes. Girl rides off to reds who are near. Priest hears of Superiors' immorality. Confronts them with it, and demands also release of prisoners. But he

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too is put in the dungeon. Peasants want to stone him, he was the cause of their defeat. But leader stops them. Chief Officer is now becoming lover also of the Superior's woman. Peasants in cell dream of "Bread—Peace—Land." Girl finds Reds. Bells. It is Sunday. Church day. Procession. Ikons. Incense. The Whites are leading out prisoners at back to be shot. Crowd in church. Ikon—Virgin cries. Miracle! Cross themselves fervently. Cross is offered to doomed men. They refuse. The doubting priest now *knows*: he dashes across to the ground and stamps on it. Special sermon to worshippers, the Bolsheviki are coming to take their land and wives and all. They must defend themselves. Arms from the church are distributed. Reds are on the way. Suddenly in the middle of the church the Girl appears. Tells that Whites are killing their own while priest talks. Her lover hears her, comes out from behind Virgin-Ikon, thus disclosing all the works complete for miracle making! Uproar. Attack priests, and surge out to the Whites. The priest now atheist, tears off his monkish garb. The lover, now Red, does the same. The Whites flee. And the peasants joyfully lead back their cattle at last to have "Bread, Peace, Land", under the Soviet!

Function.—A deliberate anti-religious film, showing the pro-Czar-anti-Soviet role the Church has always played in Russia, and in some parts does even now. Exposing also the so-called miracles which abound in the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, in some countries even today!

Form.—Another interesting example of the Griffith tradition still informing scenarios. The last minute rescue, etc.

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On the whole the treatment is straightforward, but one or two interesting touches as where child refuses the cross to look at the aeroplane propellor, and both the Priests who become Reds even in the beginning are differentiated: one shown as a flower-lover and the other as a student of nature!

A film which would undoubtedly be banned in England, or in Europe, come to that.

To the growing list of Russian regisseurs with claims to greatness can now be added the name of OKLOPKOV, Scenarist and Regisseur of *The Way of the Enthusiast*, Sovkino (Moscow). The film is at the moment under revision, due to certain requirements of the Soviet Censor, but I have had the privilege of seeing it privately in company with Oklopkov. He tells me that some of it is not clear to the Workers, it is his mistake so he must simplify. Personally I think that it is inherently a criticism of worker and peasant in certain domains where he fails or has failed, the film points out these weaknesses; and further is decidedly intellectual. But I will deal more fully with these points another time. Suffice now to say: it is a great film, with new developments. Oklopkov was first a Regisseur of the Masses, bearing out the words of Mayakovsky "The streets shall be our brushes, the squares our palettes." He has organised Mass Demonstrations where upward of 20,000 people have taken part. Then he was Regisseur at Meyerhold's Theatre. He took an active part also in stage and costume designing, and acting. He took a small but excellent rôle in Alexander Room's film *The Death Ship*. Then he made his first experimental film *Meta* and his second *Sold*

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(of which at moment we have no details): his third and last picture is *The Way of the Enthusiast* which has excited the attention of all the film world here. The film took six to seven months to complete, and has only one trained actor, the rest being drawn from the people. Oklopkov is 30 years of age.

H. P. J. M.

"A STARRING VEHICLE"

Dolly macht Karriere (*Dolly's career*) or "How to make a silly film with a clever girl."

Dolly Haas . . . where have I heard that name? Yes, it was last winter in Berlin, in a small cabaret started by young intellectual artists. There was a girl on the small stage, pretty, lively; and she sang and danced some English show-song in the most fascinating way; what a charming English girl they have got here! we thought, until—yes, until a big blue apron was handed to her from behind the curtain, she put it on, shoved her hair behind her ears, legs straddled, hands on hips, and started a market-woman's dialogue, swearing in the toughest Berlin slang—we were puzzled; now what is she? Confusion still increased when she appeared as French "disease"—long black sleeves, etc., and sang a sentimental French chanson, very French, very subtle;

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always making fun by slight exaggeration of the style, always finding out the most essential in it. And she was discovered. By Pallenberg first, then came Max Reinhardt and at last—supreme coronation!—the Ufa! There is a pretty girl, with a beautiful voice, slender legs, sparkling with vivacity, most skilful in acrobatics, with a great gift for imitating and parody—what else could she become but a tone film-star? And so they determined to build a film for her, around her; sparkling with her many talents. Listen to the exciting and most true-to-life topic: Dolly, a little milliner-girl has just lost her job, because of insolent behaviour, wants to go to the theatre as actress, and especially to sing a “hit” which her friend Fred, the clarinettist has composed, but as he does not believe in her talent (explained in a great duet) she makes up her mind to become an actress without his aid and his knowing, goes to an agency, puts on the uniform of the office-boy there, is discovered by a director who just needs an actress like her for to-morrow. And she becomes the star of his cabaret. Her friend Fred reads in the newspaper of this wonderful new actress (which he does not recognise as his friend Dolly) and determines to ask her to sing his “hit,” goes to the theatre, talks to Dolly, though he does not see her as she is sitting behind a folding screen, not quite understanding why he is turned out so violently by the unknown actress. But—*deus ex machina*—there is an old Earl, though in love with Dolly, respecting the love of the two young people, manages to make the director engage Fred as clarinettist and Dolly sing his “hit,” and so it happens; Fred sitting in the orchestra beneath the stage still does not recognise Dolly until the very end—which is very happy.

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There is a lot of good acting in this film. Dolly dancing on the piano, on the window, on the roof, Dolly in trousers, with much on, with less on; and some of her fellow-actors are excellent. But—YOU go and make a good film from this scenario! Is it really necessary that the sound-film has to go through all the stages of theatre, and to combine all the nonsense of musical comedies and shows? And, dear me, how do the authors rack their brains to make an "original" beginning; but I am sure, this time they succeeded marvelously: for the actors present themselves by stepping out from a big heart painted on a picture postcard. Sweet and so symbolical, isn't it?

T. W.

CINEMA LITERATURE

I. FRANCE.

At 2.37 p.m. upon a June afternoon in 1922, Abel Gance made a list of his artistic preferences.* From Ronsard, Homer, Hugo, Poe, via de Vinci, Rembrandt, Watteau, to Stendhal, Balzac and Tolstoy.

At 4.45 p.m. Gance's preferences had changed and a more thrilling list is presented. Novalis, Rimbaud, Cendrars,

* *Prisme* by Abel Gance. (Published by Librairie Gallimard.)

Claudel, Gide . . . Honegger, La musique hindoue . . . Shakespeare . . . Molière—Cinematographic! Gide and his *Voyage au Congo*; Honegger, whose music was synchronised to *J'avais un fidèle amant*; Shakespeare a "point of appeal" in Fairbank's *Taming of the Shrew*; Molière, the portrayal of whose *Tartuffe* must have given such joy to Jannings; also Cendrars, and presumably Gance means Blaise Cendrars, original still among modern living French authors.

Le Plan de l'Aiguille by Blaise Cendrars (c'est à toi, mon cher Abel, que je dédie ce roman) commences the adventures of Dan Yack, which lead on to a later volume *Les Confessions de Dan Yack*, a book not written but entirely dictated into a Dictaphone. "Rouleaux" take the place of "chapitres" to describe the film company, which the rich adventurer Dan Yack founds in order to see his beloved Mireille upon the screen. The realism of Mireille's descriptions of their visits together to the quaint local cinema makes one doubt if the facts are entirely fictitious. "Quand c'était un film de Louise Fazenda qui passait, on louait la loge pour huit jours et nous venions tous les jours l'applaudir. Mon grand avait une véritable passion pour la Fazenda, il la dénichait dans tous les films, même dans ceux où elle ne faisait que de la figuration. Il disait que c'était la femme la plus comique du monde parce qu'elle ne faisait pas comique, mais qu'elle était naturellement gauche."

Gance who admires Cendrars, Cendrars who dedicates to Gance, Cendrars who in 1919 wrote *La Fin du Monde*, Gance who to-day makes the film *La Fin du Monde*.

Versatile Cendrars, author of such subjects as *Anthologie*

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Nègre and 19 *Poèmes Elastiques* besides a cherishable little booklet *L'A B C du Cinema*, dated 1921 published in 1926 and which, though containing a mere 1,500 words, is in real Parisian manner issued as a limited edition.

Copy No. 61 of the A B C holds proud position on the cinema-library shelf next to Jean Epstein's little volume *Cinéma*, surely the most curious booklet on the subject ever conceived. "Nazimova, Suprême, Perle, Champagnisée," white letters on a black background, and "Nazi, Nazi, Nazimow, Nazimowa, tourne OH tourne pour la Metro," thick black letters upon two white pages paid tribute in 1921 to one who was "trépidante et exothermique" but who is today alas forgotten and left without even the recognition of having created one of the Films Till Now. "Bonjour" greets the first page of Epstein's little book and the last two pages represent film-strips, the first projecting "Bonsoir" with "Merci" just making its appearance, the second acknowledging "Merci" while "Bonsoir" is slipping off the top of the page.

Another curious French cinema book is *Drames sur Celluloïd* by the young cinéaste Pierre Chenal, who is at present completing a documentaire *Bâtir*, a comprehensive study on building illustrated in particular by unique examples of Corbusier's architecture.

Chenal's "Drames" are complete filmlets, some just momentary gags, but all written in a new kind of cinematic blank verse, each line of which is capable of being visualised. *Qualité Extra* is short and perhaps most representative of Chenal's verbal-visual literature:

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Un château en ruines sur la terrasse d'un gratte-ciel
Trois bébés arpentent le ciment en mâchonnant un cigare
Le châtelain—douillettement enveloppé de coton hydro-
phile—bégaie
La châtelaine—une ligne à la main—se penche sur Broad-
way
et ramène à elle douze Américains de taille moyenne
Un bébé tire un coup de revolver et demande si le déjeuner
est servi.

These scenarios are yet to be produced; the skit on the talky in which the sounds go wrong and the very amusing experiment for a colour film are original and would make ideal productions.

The first four volumes of the series *L'Art Cinématographique* have previously been criticised in *Close Up*, but meanwhile two new volumes have been added to the list and Volume No. 7 is in course of preparation. *Hollywood au Ralenti* by C. Meunier-Surcouf is a reportage on the life and conditions in Hollywood, where the author worked for a considerable time. It is sincere and not exaggerated and gives a glimpse of that side of Hollywood life, which the Americans rarely offer us the opportunity of imagining. Describing the cemetery, which appears to be one of the most charming places in Hollywood, the author writes: "C'est vraiment un des endroits où il ne serait pas désagréable de vivre à Hollywood, hors de la trépidation des Street Cars, de la foule des voitures et de l'agitation d'une vie artificielle dans un cadre de décors."

The sixth volume of *L'Art Cinématographique* (Félix

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Alcan, Paris) is divided into sections as are the earlier volumes. *Le Décor* is discussed by Robert Mallett-Stevens, the Parisian architect who has designed many of the décors for L'Herbier. The section *Le Costume* could not have been treated by a greater authority than Boris Bilinsky. The costume for the cinema must characterise, suggest the actor's personality. A good costume indicates by its appearance the probable thoughts of the actor.

Le Maquillage is treated trivially by Maurice Schutz, and finally there is a long and constructive chapter on *La Technique* by A.-P. Richard.

The Parisian literary vogue seems at present to be American reportage; and newspapers, magazines and books are full of it. That the cinema is recognised as forming a considerable part of public life is proved by the amount of space devoted to a survey of the cinema in nearly all of these reportages.

Scènes de la Vie Future by Georges Duhamel (Mercure de France, Paris) caused the greatest uproar amongst cinéphiles, for Duhamel with a bitter memory of the American cinema tended in his book to generalise and wrote in flowing style a complete chapter upon the cinema in which appeared the remark rapidly becoming classic: "C'est (le cinema) un divertissement d'ilotes, un passe-temps d'illettrés, de créatures misérables, ahuries par leur besoin et leurs soucis."

Further criticisms of the American cinema are to be read in *Champions du Monde* by Paul Morand and in *Un Œil Neuf sur l'Amerique* by Paul Achard.

The French cinema in literature is summed up at its best

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in the special Cinema number of the review *Le Rouge et le Noir* (July, 1928). Abel Gance, Jean Epstein, Germaine Dulac, Marcel l'Herbier, René Clair, Alexandre Arnoux, Paul Gilson, Georges Charensol and Léon Moussinac represent only one half of the names collected in this one very representative number.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

CHARACTERISATION OF SOUND TALKIES

(This interesting essay comes to us from a Japanese student in Japan, whose viewpoint indicates that the unimaginative use of sound in talking-films is exercising the minds of film-workers in Japan, as much, and perhaps more, than in the Occident.—*Ed.*)

I

To-day's talkies are, one must admit, wanting in the most important technique of the expression of sound. With what consciousness have sounds been transmitted to films since talkies were born? Were they not applied only to give the film a scientific reality or to please the innocent audience with the novelty that action and sound are synchronised to their great curiosity? Thus we hear the pattering when the people in a movie are clapping their hands and hear the song when

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Nancy Carroll opens her mouth. It is very wrong for talkies to be contented with such sounds only. I advocate with all my heart that it is necessary for talkies to accomplish a *characterisation of sound*.

II

What is meant by the words "characterisation of sound"? To simplify matters, I will explain the words "characterisation of image" in relation to silent pictures first. *A Woman of Paris*, the immortal work by Charles S. Chaplin, will afford a good instance for us. In this picture there is a scene in which Jean (Carl Miller) calls on Marie in her mansion in Paris for the first time after leaving his country. A maid-servant comes in, searches in the cabinet for a dress, when a collar falls on the floor from the cabinet. C. S. Chaplin showed a distinct contrast between the collar and the head of Jean, who had not failed to see it fall. In this case the collar was not only a mere collar, but it could be a "character" informing him of the fact that Marie (Edna Purviance) was living with a man (Adolphe Menjou). In other words, the collar was elevated to a personal level and related to Jean in spirit. This is a characterisation of image which we had commonly during the silent-picture age. As for talkies, in the same way, I assert my slogan "characterisation of sound" through which means only sounds are able to have dramatic participation in talkies. I will explain by an example: a train is about to leave the station. Then we hear (from screen) the steam-whistle blowing and wheels sounding. The sound in this instance is merely a descriptive one

and has no character. We see, on the contrary, the sound distinct from the above one in the situation which Pudovkin, famous Russian film director, has proposed in a recent number of the *Licht-Bild-Bühne*: a wife goes to the station with her husband. The train is going to start. At that moment she recollects that she must say something to him, but cannot think of it in concrete form. She grows more and more impatient. Then she hears the steam whistle blowing and the wheels sounding. (An hallucination!) She is more and more irritated. The sound of the starting train rushes into her ears. Yet the train is seen standing in its place. In this case the sound is never a "realised" sound, but is a character related to and acting on the wife, expressing the feeling of impatience. We see for the first time in this case the sound which is animated dramatically by a "talkie" technique. As for sound in the cinema, I consider its characterisation as a matter of utmost importance. A brilliant future in its application is promised in the cinema, because it is a unique art which has the privilege of free contrast between sound and image.

III

Characterisation of sound is classified into two divisions, according as to whether the object acted on directly by its characterised sound is the other character in the cinema or outside the cinema. The one is realised in the above situation proposed by Pudovkin, the other by the following situation which I have imagined: A kitchen. The maidservant comes in, begins to boil eggs and sits down. She recalls

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having been insulted by her master without any real reason. She is more and more provoked. Then the sound of the boiling water is produced becoming louder and louder. In this case the sound of the water does not act upon her, but is a character agent acting upon the other character outside the cinema (that is, the audience), expressing her anger.

There is a particular case in the characterisation of sounds, which comes from their special nature. That is, when we hear a sound only, it is permitted for us in the strictly limited sphere to be able to recognise the conception of the sounding body, (the source of the sound). Thus the audience, hearing the sound only, cannot understand from what kind of source it comes and will suffer embarrassment and displeasure. Although this truth, in a sense, narrows the practicable ranges of characterisation of independent sound, (but readers, don't be anxious! As described in the foregoing chapter, in cinema every free contrast between image and sound is possible), in the other sense the sound is found to have an extraordinary characterisation effect called *suspense*. On this point I except suspense-effect given by the sound in talkies. As one of the excellent examples in which the characterisation as suspense was successful, we have had a recent talkie *Welcome Danger*, featuring Harold Lloyd. The black scene accompanied by the sound only (the object acted upon is the audience), and the gag by means of the hand organ (the object Harold). We know as a matter of fact that an innumerable number of talkies were produced carrying on detective stories, but it is doubtful whether the directors had accepted the standpoint of my recognition concerning sound, because in those detective talkies were found

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almost no efforts to succeed in obtaining good effects with sound. It seems to me that easiness of informing the course of ratiocination was the chief motive in their productions. I heard that Robert Sherwood—so it is reported in Japan—abused the mystery-murder-case story in talkie form under the title *Talkie No. 1*. But this is an excellent place for playing talkie technics.

According to the definition of physics, sound is a hearing sense for vibrations of medium transmitted by a vibrating body (the source of the sound). In this meaning the sound implies man's voice, songs, music, animal cries and sounds of bodies, each of which has different characteristics in the nature of its sounding, and cannot be discussed in the same way: the first two can express thoughts, music can be emotional, and the contrary. The last two, in the ordinary sense, have no sentiment, to say nothing of thoughts. The word "sound," used in foregoing sections, is limited in its implication only to sounds having no sentiment or thought. But even the other sounds, namely man's voice and music can be reduced to the sound of my implication when the sentiments or thoughts they have in their original nature do not matter whatsoever in the emotional structure of the film. And then reduced sounds can be again characterised. The instance with music reduced and characterised is seen in *Smiling Irish Eyes* directed by William Seiter, Kathleen (Colleen Moore), having misunderstood Rory (James Hall) on the stage, walks along the street, when she hears the ballad *Smiling Irish Eyes* coming from every loud speaker and gramophone and covers her ears. In this case the sweetness or emotion of the ballad is out of the question. It may

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be a mere series of noises, for it is enough now that it may be only recognised by Kathleen to be *Smiling Irish Eyes*. That is, the ballad, which is music, and, at the same time, a man's voice, is reduced to mere sound and then characterised. Such a use of the voice must be elevated to great meaning by many critics and directors, because *it does not break the internationality of cinema*, the destruction of which is in question since the present talkie age began.

IV

As it is not desirous for readers that my essay should be too prolonged, I will put aside my pen after considering one further point in conclusion. It is this: that scientific improvements must be expected so that characterisation of sound may exercise its power to the fullest extent, especially in two particulars: the one is related to the purity or clearness of sound heard from the screen by the audience; the other is the range of sound recorded on film, which must be enlarged more than it is now. The clearer the sound, that is, the more representational of the real sound, the more sharply is made the characterisation of sound. As for the range of sound, to-day's talkie can only absorb the sounds of thirty to five thousand in frequency, (the number of vibrations per second). To realise the great possibilities of characterisation of sound in talkie, a loud sound shaking the talkie theatre to its foundation and a trifling sound as of dripping water are both necessary.

YASUSHI OGINO.

Japan, 1930.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

Fewer illustrations are included in the November *Close Up* than is usual, as it is intended to make the December issue an illustrated record of the Second Congress of the Independent Cinema and a survey of experimental work done in Europe during the year.

AN INTERESTING NEW DIRECTOR.

TWO COMMENTS ON ONE MAN..

When Cavalcanti was in London to see his films at the Avenue Pavilion, I asked him if he intended to study the talkies which were, at the time, a novelty for a Parisian..

"Study," he replied, "is too big a word; I simply want to look at and hear the new American pictures."

He said a lot more and not all of it was very clear to himself, but I can remember this:

"All these difficult terms relate to art. The cinema is not, strictly, art; for art is something that you can control. You may be able to control a single film but not CINEMA. Really, photography is the simplest way to approach life.

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There are, I admit, rules which you may not break (the film has its own ethics—Youth, Love and Universal Appeal). However clever a man may be, don't you think that once he is in the theatre he will *feel* like anybody else? Is he not human and is it not dark? Please do not judge what I say by the films which I have made; they are experiments to help myself."

Now an English director is putting this into meritorious practise. Oddly, his cameraman is Jimmy Rodgers who shot *En Rade*, *Rien Que les Heures*, and *Yvette*.

Michael Hankinson has, for years, been editing pictures for the Film Society: *New London*, made for the *Under Forty Society*, is his first individual production. It sets out to show the horrors of the slums, the hourly need of new buildings. It is simple (use of fine types, etc.), moving and beautiful (composition and quality of images).

There is a static feeling which is no demerit, rather is it heraldic. Shot of a looked-up-at house: screen parted per pale, two coats; first, argent, slum dwelling semée with tears; second, gules, a statue passant—Pudovkin. Close up of an earwig on child's bed: azure, a ray of sun-arc issuing out of the dexter corner of escutcheon, sable, an insect tusked.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

The "Under Forty Club" is responsible for the production of a *A New London*, a two reel effort made for the purpose of helping the Club's campaign against slums. M. K. Hankinson, directing, has made a neat job of this sombre fragment of working class life. Shots of modern technical

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efficiency, aeroplanes, railways, docks, introduce a title establishing London as the workshop of the world, the Capital of an Empire, swiftly followed by shots of disease-ridden slums and derelict streets.

In the out-patients section of an East End hospital a doctor is examining a child, dying of consumption. Only a change of environment can save him. The harassed mother explains despairingly that it is impossible, they are tied to their filthy tenement, over-run with rats and bugs. And in that foul atmosphere the boy dies.

Hankinson's direction is straightforward and sincere, and obviously influenced by a close study of Russian methods. Films of this kind are generally so slovenly and slipshod.

Jimmy Rogers, at the camera, gives us some beautiful dockside compositions, strangely reminiscent of the lucent beauty of *En Rade*. His camera angles mean something. The interiors were shot in the A.C.A. studios and achieve good effects with an admirable economy of material.

R. BOND.

THERE'S MUSIC TO THAT.

Edmund Meisel tells us that the Berlin press was enthusiastic over his music for a Russian cartoon (machines instead of animals) which was screened with the first performance of the talkie, *Potemkin*; the Berlin press had something, too, to say about the sound version of *Potemkin* and there's music to that.

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Markus Productions of Paris signed Meisel for five pictures; the first, *Militarismus*, is already in production. The pictures will be recorded by Tobis in Berlin.

O. B.

THE LEGIONNAIRE.

(Silent)

One would have thought—one would—what with Louis Ralph directing, Hans Stüwe and Eva von Berne starring and the Foreign Legion as theme that something would have come of it, though that Miss von Berne should be doing anything so positively discreditable as to get mixed up with the Foreign Legion ought to have been adequate warning. Because it was never once the real Foreign Legion which crept into the picture though many of these worthy film-studio Legionnaire-boys did try horribly hard to look wicked and pulled the most extraordinary faces when they were disappointed of water. Gee! how they carried on when they reached the fort, laying hands on all the drink (alcoholic too) they could find and threatening to shoot their officers, but Stüwe, brave lad, soon put an end to all that, waving a flag from on high and singing the Legion song (all about honour, discipline, self-control and for all I know sexual abstinence) and just in time too for the treacherous Arabs crawling on their bellies in accordance with the best Arab tradition were hard on the fort and all the bullets of the Legionnaire-boys didn't seem to stop them, but I suppose that song was one

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too much for them because they all started rushing back the way they came and Stüwe was congratulated and decorated the while Miss Berne was crawling in the desert because she had come ever such a long way to find Stüwe and try to take him away from that horrid Legion and must have been quite exhausted only a soldier picked her up so that she arrived in time for the decoration ceremony and threw her arms wide and shouted GEORGE, and my eyes were so full of tears I can't tell you what happened next.

(Yes—and why not give the Legion its due? In the name of vice, brutality, suffering, hatred and crime. Why not?)
H. A. M.

ACCUSÉE, LEVEZ-VOUS!

If I have previously expressed an opinion that René Clair's *Sous les Toits de Paris* was the finest French talking-film I feel justified in saying to-day that it has been eclipsed by Maurice Tourneur's *Accusée, levez-vous!*

The themes of the two films do not of course permit them to be compared, but generalising it can be said that Tourneur has appreciated and utilised to a more advanced degree than Clair the possibilities of sound.

The story, a Mary Duggan theme taking place first behind the scenes of a music-hall and then within the precincts of a law-court, would immediately appear to condemn the film.

On the contrary, for the first time, a back-stage atmosphere has been caught. Narrowness, crowdedness, tiredness are all felt. Tourneur's camera is in every narrow pas-

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sage, girls brush by the lens, en passant a dancing-girl complains in English. Scenes end with naturalness in the middle of a phrase, and counterpoint is so subtly used that it passes unnoticed. The long law-court scene amazingly *untheatrical*. Close-ups, long-shots, moving camera, one feels the whole law-court even when one man is speaking. The old-time actor put in for the sake of comedy, although his enunciation was a pleasure, did not fit into this *cadre* of reality, so ably conveyed by each member of a powerful caste. Gaby Morlay as the accused is brilliant, putting such nuances in her expressions and movements as if she were really living the part. Seldom can one really say that with sincerity. The film is having an enormous success in Paris.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

A TEXT-BOOK.

THE TALKIES. By John Scotland. Crosby Lockwood, 7s. 6d.

I find this a most exhilarating book. It is written in "journalese"; there are no theories in it; it is an entirely practical and technical book on the working of talkies. But because it deals so straightforwardly with the inventions of the men who made the present display of talkies possible, one rises from it with a sense of excitement that such things are possible, with gratitude to the work those men did, and with a little of that vision some at least of them possessed. The fact that all their work is expended on bunk does not worry one at all, for the authors very wisely leave out of

consideration the talkies that are projected on talkie equipment; that does not seem to matter. What we have is an understanding of this thing, this capturing of light and sound. It is such an achievement that the rest does not matter; the talkies that have been made seem to have had no effect. This book burns them out, like sun; or does at any rate to me.

Mr. Hepworth in a foreword says " . . . the silent picture had an opportunity which it never really developed . . . some hint of its potentialities was given in films which . . . called the very forces of nature, storms and flood and forest and savage beasts to be their actors. But the opportunity for real greatness was scarcely touched and producers who had the whole world for an arena preferred the easier way—a puppet-show in a closed-in studio." That is a salutary stone dropped into our minds, and prevents that too-complacent "all's right with the world to come" which usually attacks those who write on mechanical developments, (witness *Hephaestus*). One feels at once that this book won't make any mistakes; so there are no rash prophecies; it leaves you to do that.

"Edison's invention of the talking machine was the result of his effort to give sound to his kinetoscope pictures . . . But the people went crazy over the picture and disregarded the dialogue, and so it happened that the two became separated in the very beginning and it was not until thirty years later that ten thousand inventors set to work to bring them together again." There, in a nut-shell, you have the story, and succeeding chapters inspect and expand it. All the various attempts to produce talking pictures are recounted;

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the whole field is surveyed, and then every different system is examined. We are taken into laboratories, printing rooms, studios and even the projection-room itself. There is little mention of actors; they come in when the work is done. The talkies are a mechanical affair and this book is the book of the mechanics. Inventors and operators are the heroes. We learn how talkies are made possible. This seems so much more important than what they are used on, for this is the root of the business. There are excellent illustrations of such things as photo-cells, blimps, developing plants, talkie projectors at the Plaza, variable area sound-film and contact prints from Technicolor negative. There is a plate showing the first apparatus to make a film—Frieze-Green's outfit, and the frontispiece shows the Paramount studios. Finally there is a chapter on colour-processes. I have a feeling that this book will be missed by many because it deals only with practical problems and is unpretentious; but it teaches one the working of talkies and there is no one whose opinions will not benefit by knowing that. *The Talkies* is simply a text-book, which has the advantage of being entirely technical and perfectly easy to understand.

R. H.

PHYSIOPOLIS.

M. Jean Dreville is shortly presenting in Paris his film *Physiopolis*, made recently at Villennes, that stronghold of the French Naturists, where young men and women make

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their bodies perfect under the sun. . . It is described as of a "grande intensité de vie," and will be photographed as beautifully as the recent *When the Ears of Corn Bend Over*. Mr. Dreville writes :

This film will initiate us into the life—always a little mysterious until now—of the French Naturists. It is possible that this fascinating subject will be found by some, shocking in various degrees, just as among others it will be found—and rightly so—particularly chaste and healthy. It will be, nevertheless, a cinegraphic document, technically original, and—who knows?—by the revelations which it makes—a factor in the physical and moral uplifting of the race !

The presentation to the Parisian press will be preceded by a discussion by Madame Dussane, of the Society of the Comedie Française, or Doctors Gaston or André Durville.

This film was made entirely in the surroundings of Villennes, director and cameraman leaving modesty in the cloak-room, and being bound by the severe but salutary regime of the naturists : No alcoholic drinks, *pain complet*, tomatoes and apples in oil, delicious bananas. . . One of the two was even subjected to the traditional and miserable effects of sunburn. He will remember it all his life, having generously left his epidermis and skin of his back on the field *de prise de vues*.

O, Cinema, what crimes of *lèse-beauté* are committed in thy name !

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FROM THE REPORT OF THE FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF FEDERATION OF WORKERS' FILM SOCIETIES, SEPTEMBER, 1930.

Censorship.

At one of the early meetings of the Council consideration was given to the petition on Censorship, organised by *Close Up*. The purpose of this petition was to agitate for the creation of a special Censorship Board and a special Censorship category for films of proved artistic, educational and technical merit. While sympathising strongly with the objects of the *Close Up* petition the Council considered that the petition did not go far enough and that some wider method of challenging the Censorship should be worked out. With this in view the Council decided to approach the R.A.C.S. who control a cinema in Tooting. The Council asked the R.A.C.S. to receive a deputation and it was intended to ask the R.A.C.S. if they would co-operate with the Federation in challenging the Censorship and the authority of the L.C.C. by allowing the London Workers' Film Society to exhibit in the Tooting Hall an uncensored film. The R.A.C.S. however, declined to receive a deputation from the Federation.

A little while after this an All-Party Committee was formed in the House of Commons for the purpose of agitating for a change in the Censorship Regulations, and particularly in the L.C.C. regulations governing exhibitions by private Film Societies. The Federation supplied various material and information to a number of M.P.'s who were members of the London W.F.S. The L.C.C. has now adopted certain

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new regulations governing private Film Societies in the London area, which while in some respects are a step forward, are in other respects still very unsatisfactory, in so far that while films not submitted to the Censors can be exhibited by bona fide private Film Societies, films that have been rejected by the Board of Censors cannot be shown.

Previous to this the London W.F.S. had applied to the L.C.C. for permission to exhibit uncensored films, but this application had been rejected in spite of the fact that such privileges had been accorded to the London Film Society. The London W.F.S. rightly interpreted this decision as an act of class bias and conducted an agitation against it, and it can be claimed with some justification that such changes as have now taken place under the new L.C.C. regulations are to some extent due to the constant agitation of the London W.F.S.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

Improvement in portable sound-recording equipment is resulting in a wholesale return to the making of out-of-door pictures. Mostly these are the perennially popular Westerns, known in Hollywood lingo as "Horse Operas." Following *In Old Arizona*, we have had *The Texan*, *The Virginian*, *The Big Trail*, *The Border Legion*, *Arizona Kid*, *The Santa Fe Trail*, as well as several others of like character, and many more are either contemplated or already in production. Not only is it possible in the making of such pictures to convey

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sound-recording apparatus to the most distant locations, but portable film laboratories and projection machines are also now part of a travelling company's equipment; so that the "rushes" may be viewed on location immediately following a day's "shooting," thus making it possible, if necessary, to have retakes made at once.

* * *

The Fox Grandeur film for enlarged projection now has a competitor in an invention recently perfected by M-G-M's technical staff. Designated as "Realife," this film makes possible the projection of wide-screen pictures with an ordinary projector, so that no change in theatre equipment is necessary. In this respect it offers a decided advantage over Grandeur. The first picture to be filmed with Realife is King Vidor's current production, *Billy the Kid*.

* * *

Los Angeles, of which Hollywood is a one-tenth section, has the distinction of being the first city in the United States to establish a motion-picture theatre devoted exclusively to the showing of foreign-language films. These are not imported productions, but films made in Hollywood for the various foreign markets. The theatre, named The California International, one of the largest and most pretentious in the city, opened its doors in August with the showing of *El Cuerpo del Delito*. This has since been followed by other Spanish pictures, as well as French, German, and Italian. Out of Los Angeles' population of one and a half million there are approximately two hundred and fifty thousand who are Spanish-speaking. As to those of other nationalities, it is estimated there are enough of them, together with Ameri-

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cans familiar with various languages, to insure a profitable patronage of this unique cinema.

* * *

Hollywood is threatened with competition both to the north and the south of it. The Canadian-American Talking Picture Studios, Ltd., are reported as ready to launch the building of a large studio near Montreal, with a view to producing "shorts," serials, and news films, as well as talking features. As a competitor specifically for the Spanish-speaking market, a project is under way to establish a million-dollar studio in Agua Caliente, in the Mexican state of Lower California. This project has also the incidental object of adding a further attraction to Agua Caliente, a recently established gaming resort, much frequented by the sporting element of Hollywood, and with ambitions to become a second Monte Carlo.

* * *

Under the title of Metropolitan Productions, Ltd., the RKO film company have launched a subsidiary organisation for the producing of stage plays which will subsequently be filmed and transferred to the screen. To this end the company have leased a theatre in Los Angeles, where the new plays will first be put on and tried out. Should any of them prove a decided hit they will be given a further stage showing in New York prior to screening.

* * *

Mary Pickford has decided to stick to films—at least to the extent of one more trial in the talkies. She had been seriously considering a proposal to appear on the New York stage, the refuge now of many a Hollywood "has been."

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But this plan has been shelved for the nonce and she is preparing, under Joseph Schenck's management, to do a talking version of *Kiki*, which Mrs. Schenck, otherwise known as Norma Talmadge, brought to the silent screen a few years ago.

* * *

Mary's husband has likewise, after much indecision and hesitation, decided to stake his reputation on another talkie—*Reaching for the Moon*. It is significant, however, that the publicity in regard to it emanating from the Schenck organisation is laying particular stress on the many notable personalities associated with it. Heretofore the mere announcement of a Fairbanks picture was regarded as enough in itself. Its author, its director, its leading lady and its other characters were of slight moment. In the present instance, however, emphasis is being laid on the fact that Fairbanks is to be supported by Bebe Daniels and Edward Everett Horton; that the author of the scenario is William Anthony McGuire, one of America's leading playwrights; that the director of the film is Edmund Goulding, who leaped into fame with Swanson's *The Trespasser*; and that the supervisor of the production is Irving Berlin, who is also contributing the musical score. Apparently, therefore, the lustre of Fairbanks' name is no longer alone considered sufficient to insure profit and éclat for a picture.

* * *

Lawrence Tibbett's next picture, to be directed by King Vidor for M-G-M, will be *The Southerner*. Greta Garbo, having completed the German version of her *Annie Christie*, will next essay the rôle of an ultra-modern French siren in

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Inspiration, directed by Clarence Brown. The classic *East Lynne*, with its maudlin drama, is under way at the Fox studios, with Ann Harding of *Holiday* fame in the leading rôle and supported by Clive Brook and Conrad Nagel. Jackie Coogan, now quite grown up since his screen debut in Chaplin's *The Kid*, is returning to the films, under the Paramount banner, as Tom Sawyer in Mark Twain's immortal story. Universal studios are filming the horrific *Dracula* under the direction of Tod Browning. Jack Buchanan, of the London musical stage, will make his first Hollywood appearance in Lubitsch's comedy for Paramount, *Monte Carlo*. M-G-M are photodramatizing Wicky Baum's *Menschen Im Hotel* for Joan Crawford. The same company have purchased the screen rights to the Hungarian musical play, *Katica*, by Ferenc Martos and Fred Markus, and will shortly put it into production.

C. H.

A.S.C.: ITS ANNUAL.

The American Society of Cinematographers, Hollywood, California, U.S.A., has published its first Cinematographic Annual. It is interesting to observe the film from the viewpoint of the cameraman, the least known of the workers in the cinema. The A.S.C.'s monthly, *The American Cinematographer*, is too much like a house organ (you-kiss-me-I'll-kiss-you) to afford a real understanding of the full wisdom

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of the cameraman, who calls himself a cinematographer. The journal intends to appeal to the amateur—confused with the “fan”—and therefore innocuous and fatuous blurbs on Mary Astor and her Filmo are published. But here is a symposium, so to speak, on the motion picture by trained technicians. I list the essays: Cinematography an Art Form, Lewis W. Physioc; Cinematics, Slavko Vorkapich; The Evolution of Film; Optical Science in Cinematography, W. B. Rayton; The Evolution of the Motion Picture Professional Camera, Joseph A. Dubray; Composition in Motion Pictures, Daniel Bryan Clark; Painting with Light, Victor Milner; Sensitometry, Emery Huse; Light Filters and their Use in Cinematography, Ned Van Buren; Borax Developer Characteristics, H. W. Moyse and D. R. White; Materials for Construction of Motion Picture Processing Apparatus, J. I. Crabtree, G. E. Matthews and J. F. Ross; Effect of the Water Supply in Processing Motion Picture Film, J. I. Crabtree and G. E. Matthews; The Art of Motion Picture Make-Up, Max Factor; Pictorial Beauty in the Photoplay, William Cameron Menzies; Philosophy of Motion Pictures, George O'Brien; Wide Film Development, Paul Allen; The Still Picture's Part in Motion Pictures, Fred Archer; Motion Picture Studio Lighting with Incandescent Lamps, R. E. Farnham; Colour Rendition, Jackson J. Rose; Motion Pictures in Natural Colour, Hal Hall and William Stull; The Ancestry of Sound Recording, H. G. Knox; The Nature of Sound, A. W. Nye; Architectural Acoustics, Vern O. Knudsen; Sound Personnel and Organisation, Carl Dreher; Motion Picture Sound Recording, by R.C.A. Photophone System, R. H. Townsend; by Fox Film Company, E. H. Hansen;

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I begin with a consideration of the articles on the esthetics of the motion picture. John F. Seitz, president of the A.S.C., writes passionately in his Introduction: "The motion picture of to-day is the greatest medium of expression the world has ever known . . . so will the motion picture of the future be superior to writing in expressing every concrete form and phase of human endeavor. . . While not so pure an art form as poetry, painting, sculpture, music or the drama," (how pure an art form is the last?) "it can partake something of the special properties of these arts and combine them into a unified whole." On the whole, this is a sensible introduction, presenting truisms with sincerity and a calm ardor. Indeed, Mr. Seitz renders Mr. Physioc's essay possessing no specific stipulations but speaking of "artist," "individuality," "feeling" in the manner of a Chautauqua evangelist or a writer of books on success, not only useless but somewhat obscene. Both quote; but in what purports to be a serious call to action, unilluminated quotations are pomposities only. Vorkapich's essay starts me off wrong with this juvenilism—how much longer, O Lord!—"There—in that one word—*motion*—we have perhaps our clue." Timid?

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why "*perhaps*"? I begin to writhe: "Motion is energy visualised, therefore motion is a symbol of life itself. Immobility is death. And yet, there is no immobility—within every atom the infinitesimal electrons keep on whirling." Vorkapich admits he finds writing difficult. Why was not a visual-minded person (as Vorkapich says he is) who could write asked to do the job? Arts he finds two: static and spatial; dynamic and temporal; and now a third—the movie. There is truth in this; but I prefer a more useful terminology—intensive and progressive; with the movie the progressive moving toward the intensive: here is the description of the film's nature and evolution. Vorkapich recognises that continuous motion (action) is not the most valid. *Pause* is motion (rhythm) as are *visual changes*, such as "lap-dissolves, fades, changes of focus, changes in iris, rhythmical cutting, etc. The last mentioned is one of the most important elements of expressive cinematography. Montage, of course—or, as the French have called it, "interior movement." Vorkapich lists kinds of "exterior movements," the motion of the materials performing. By distilling the actual from the maze of words, one can obtain from Vorkapich's thesis valuable *details*.

When we enter into the technical chapters, we are in a field of certain foliage, a dependable encyclopedia prepared by experienced men. I pause a moment with Menzies, the winner of the 1928 award of merit of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for outstanding in Motion Picture Art Direction. The very title of his contribution to this volume is borrowed from Victor Freeburg's book of several years ago. This fact of borrowing serves to describe Menzies. He

is an unoriginal fetish, for whose work the soggy adjective "artistical" can be used in place of "artistic"—he isn't even virtuoso enough to be called "arty." The United Artists' featurettes he makes with Hugo Riensenfeld—a "quince-kneed" Roxy—are abominations of columned light, ornamental arrangements to the most bazaarish conception of the meaning of music. And his article substantiates this reaction: it is a sop to "the newly awakened taste of the public" but doesn't say one basic thing about "pictorial beauty in the photoplay." The few illustrations he presents (to enlighten, evidently, the cameraman) are illustrations only, and the procedure of his work does not yet tell us what are the principles of design in the cinema. "This paper," we are told by The Editor, "was read before a class in appreciation of the Photoplay, at the University of Southern California; a course conducted in conjunction with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences." George O'Brien, Fox Star, says a few words on "Philosophy of Motion Pictures": it explains the difficulties of directors by its adolescent inanity—a success talk to football players: team-work, you know. The photographs in this volume satisfy the "artistical."

But when once into the technical portions, the volume serves a purpose undeniable. Here are materials documentary and explanatory, historical and descriptive, a fundamental course in the machinery of the motion picture, from which an intelligent reader may deduce more about the movie's art than has been presented in the chapters pretending towards art. Some of the technical articles are but fragments, but cumulatively they are informative and comprise a

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body of basic literature in the workings of the cinema. They justify sufficiently the project of the Annual. I would suggest that the A.S.C. for next year create a board of planning and selection that would include the critical students of the motion picture, and that the volume be concerned with the esthetic and ideologic bases of the art of the film by allowing those who understand such values best treat of them. A Menzies forced to construct an alpha-omega of art direction at work, would be obliged to keep out of pastures he cannot appreciate. In all modesty, I believe that an article like my "Tendencies in the Cinema"—which appeared in the *American Cinematographer*—belongs to the *Cinematographic Annual*. Or Bakshy might be asked to write upon the Screen as an Instrument of the Film.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

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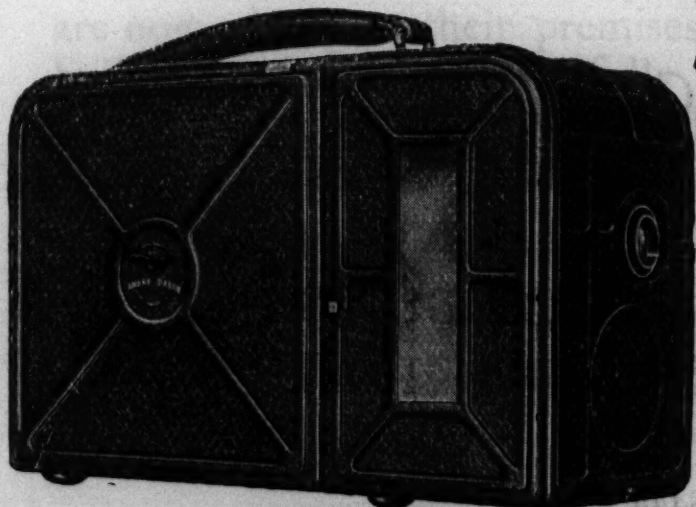
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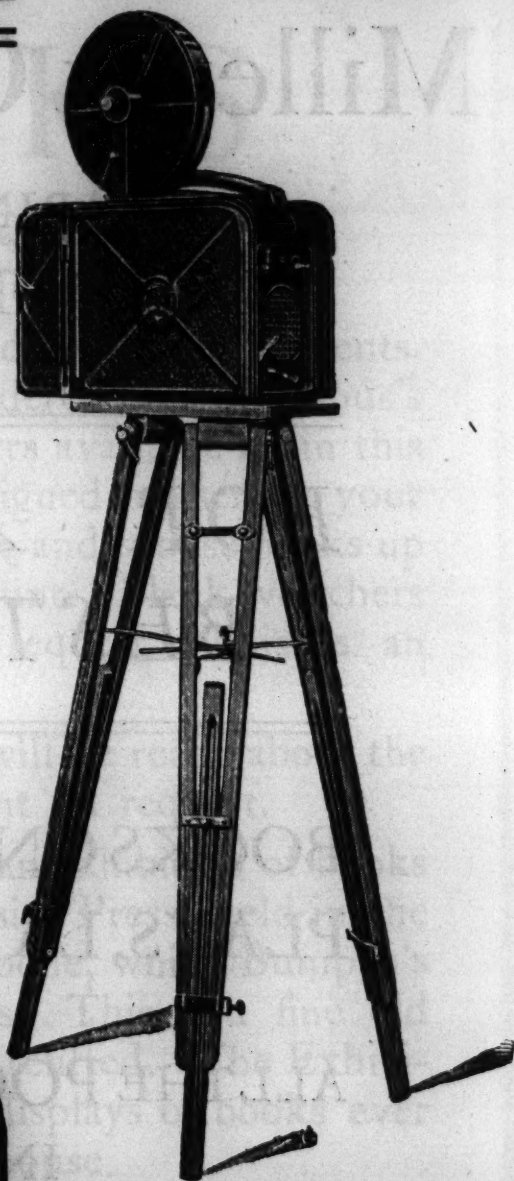
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